

SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON SEVERAL
SUBJECTS
AND
OCCASIONS.

BY

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SERMONS

DISCOURSES

SUBJECTS

PREPARED
ON OCCASIONS

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS
WERE PREACHED AT
THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTIN
IN THE CITY OF LONDON



By the Rev. John Henry Newman, D.D.,
Professor of Theology in the University of
Oxford, and formerly Rector of St. Mary's
Magdalen College, Oxford.
The sermon was preached on the
Sabbath day, the 10th of June, 1843,
at the Church of St. Martin in the City
of London, on the occasion of the
annual meeting of the Society for
the Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts.

The Publisher's

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons being
the Genuine Works of that
Great, but Unfortunate Prelate,
whose Name they bear (as I assure
the World, bating the Errors of the
Press, they all of them are, and as
the inimitable Style in which they
are written, proves them to be)
there needs no Apology for the Pu-
blication of them: That they are
His, is sufficient to justify their

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Ap-

P R E F A C E.

Appearance in Print; and to recommend them likewise to the Reader: For his Enemies and Friends seem all to agree in this Part of his Character, That he was as Judicious, Instructive, Convincing, Persuasive, and Delightful a Preacher, as ever England bred.

The only Excuse therefore, that I think myself obliged to make on this Occasion, is, for not Publishing more of them, than what are contained in these two posthumous Volumes; for every one will naturally conclude, that he left a great many more behind him, having been a constant Preacher for about Twenty Years, and an occasional one a great deal longer.

The

P R E F A C E.

The true Reason of my not doing it then is this: He burnt a good many of them himself at Paris, and, by a Writing found among what were left, signified, that these were the only ones fit to be printed; so that without acting contrary to the Bishop's Opinion of his own Performances, of which he was certainly the best Judge, no more could, and therefore no more ought to be Published: And it being from thence resolved, that no more should, the only effectual Way of preventing it, was, to commit the rest to the Flames. Which was accordingly done, in my Presence, by William Morice Esq; his Dutiful and Worthy Son in Law, and Executor. To whom I take this Opportunity of Acknowledging myself

P R E F A C E.

much obliged for several considerable Acts of Friendship; but particularly for the Benefit of Publishing these pious Remains of my dear Friend and Patron, whom I greatly Admired, Loved, and Reverenced; and to whose Memory I therefore Dedicate them, with an Heart full of Gratitude and Respect.

Tho. Moore.

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ADVER-

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SINCE the Printing of these Volumes, I find the Name of Atterbury so injuriously and scurrilously treated in an History just now publish'd, that, to obviate all ill Impressions of him, which the Reader may possibly receive from thence, I judge it not amiss to give him a true Notion of the Historian's Character, taken out of the Preface to Dr. Hickes's three Treatises publish'd in 1709. where it is thus said of him: — He was famous for his great Freedom in censuring the Clergy; insomuch, that when he pretended sometimes to commend a few of the best, and brightest of them, who were esteem'd the Ornaments of the Church, he was observ'd to do it with so many *Buts*, and Exceptions, that like the Adjuncts, which destroy their Subject, they null'd the Praises he pretended to give, and turn'd them almost into perfect Disgrace. And the same Author, after giving us a Specimen

ADVERTISEMENT.

men of the Historian's Ill-will in general towards the Clergy, by reciting a Passage out of the first Volume of this very History, then shewn him in Manuscript (which I think too gross to repeat) concludes his Account of him with this stinging Reflection:— Were I so vain, as to desire to live in History, it should be in this, upon Condition the Writer of it would not speak well of me, but ill: For the Defamations of such Historians are certain Signs of Merit; the Dishonourable Characters of such vile Pens, are true Marks of Honour; and their Praises and Panegyricks, like the Pillory, are Infamy, Scandal and Disgrace. So will jealous and inquisitive Posterity think of the Characters in this *Anecdote*; they will interpret them all, whether good or bad, by the *Rule of contrary*; they will believe nothing upon the bare Report of the Author, but be apt to think ill of those, of whom he speaks well, and well of all, of whom he speaks ill.

I shall add no Reflections of my own on this Occasion, for I think there needs none, but leave the World to judge, how far Dr. Hickes's Words are verified in Burnet's History, and the Reputation it bears.

THE
PUBLICK MANNER,
In which the
G O S P E L
Was at first promulged,
One considerable Evidence of its
DIVINE AUTHORITY.

VOL. III,

B

THE
COURT OF COMMONS
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED
HATH PASSED THE FOLLOWING
RESOLUTIONS

That the sum of one hundred
thousand pounds be granted
unto His Majesty for the
better service of His Majesty
in the said Parliament

TO BE PAID BY PARLIAMENT

IN THE YEAR OF HIS MAJESTY'S

SAID PARLIAMENT

THE FIRST OF JANUARY

IN THE YEAR OF HIS MAJESTY'S

SAID PARLIAMENT

THE FIRST OF JANUARY

The GOSPEL openly Published.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

Westminster-Abbey,

November 1. 1718.

ACTS xxvi. 26.

This Thing was not done in a Corner.

IT might be hoped, that, in a Coun-SERM.
try, where the Religion of *Christ* is I.
not only publickly professed, but inter-
woven into the Civil Frame, and esta-
blish'd by a Law, the Truth of Christi-
B 2 anity

SERM. anity might at all times be taken for
 I. granted; and that the Ministers of *Christ*
 might have nothing to do, but to build
 on that Foundation, and be ever employ-
 ed in exciting Men to a Practice suitable
 Tit. ii. 10 to their Profession, and to *adorn the*
Doctrine of our God and Saviour in all
things. But alas! the frequent and
 daring Attempts of *Infidelity* that inter-
 rupt us in our Course, make it necessary
 Heb. vi. 1. for us to *lay again the Foundation* (as the
 Apostle speaks) and to apologize for
 Christianity, just as it were now in its
 infant State, and newly setting forth in
 the World.

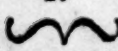
God forgive *Them*, who put us upon this
 unwelcome Task!— In the mean time
We, I'm sure, were not to be forgiven,
 should we appear less solicitous to sup-
 port and vindicate that Faith, into which
 we were baptized, and to the Preaching
 of which we are peculiarly dedicated,
 than some Men are to undermine and
 destroy it. And of *All* the Circumstan-
 ces which add a particular Strength to
 the Evidence given for the Truth of the
 Gospel,

Gospel, there is none more advantageous S E R M.
to it, than the Consideration of that *Fair*, ^{I.}
Open, and *Illustrious* Manner, wherein it
was proved, and propagated by *Christ*
and his Apostles. There was no Af-
fectionation of *Privacy* in what they said,
or did; their Doctrines were preached,
and their Miracles wrought in broad
Day-light, and in the Face of the World;
in the most frequented Places, before
thousands, and ten thousands of Witnesses:
This thing, says St. Paul, in his admi-
rable Apology before *Agrippa* and *Festus*,
was not done in a Corner.

I shall briefly open and *illustrate* this
Truth, in order to (what I chiefly intend)
the drawing from thence some useful
Observations and *Improvements*, which it
will naturally afford us.

First, When our Saviour began to publish I.
the Gospel of his Kingdom, he did not,
as Deceivers use to do, vent his new Do-
ctrines, or pretend to perform his Won-
ders (the Evidence of his divine Mission)
in Places where there was no body fit to
B 3 Oppose

SERM. Oppose the One, or to Disprove the Other.

1.  From the first Moment he entered upon his Office, he appeared *publickly*; he taught, he conversed, he did Miracles *publickly* [not gaining upon Mankind by *Stealth*, not opening his Pretences *Darkly* at first, and to a *Few*, and then, by their Means, drawing in Others, and going on thus *under-hand* to form an Interest, and to establish a Party, which, as soon as he should make his Publick Claim, might immediately come in to him, support, and own him. No] he broke out upon the World *all at once*, came into the midst of Men without any Partisans, or Followers, presently opened his Commission, and took upon himself the Character of an Ambassador from Heaven.

Throughout the whole Course of his Ministry, he addressed himself constantly to *Multitudes*, lived chiefly in great *Towns* and *Cities*, and in the most *frequented* Parts of them, the *Streets*, the *Market-places*, the *Temple*, and the *Synagogues*; where his Life, and Doctrine,
'and

and Miracles might, by his professed SERM.
Enemies be narrowly Observed and Ex- I.
amined. And if at any time he with-
drew into the Defart, and did Wonders
there, it was not in order to fly the Eyes
of Men, but that he might have *Room*,
by that means, to manifest his divine
Power, and preach his Heavenly Truths
to yet greater Numbers. [Accordingly
we find with him in the WilderNESS
three thousand Witnesses of a Miracle,
at One time, and even five thousand at
Another.] And therefore, when the
High Priest questioned him concerning
his Disciples and his Doctrine, he made
this Reply, *I spake openly to the World, I* Joh. xviii:
ever taught in the Synagogue, and in the 20, 21.
Temple, whither the Jews always resort;
and in Secret have I said nothing: Why
askest thou me? Ask them which heard me,
what I have said unto them; behold, they
know what I said.

The *Beginning* of Miracles that *Jesus*
did, was before much Company, at a
Marriage Feast; and the *Last* he wrought
were in the midst of *Jerusalem*; where

S. E. R. M. the whole Nation of the *Jews* were then

I. assembled to celebrate the Passover. And
 whenever he manifested his Divine Mission by the chief Seal and Evidence of it, his raising any one from the Dead, he took care at that time especially to be surrounded with Numbers.

He pitched upon such Persons for the Subjects of his miraculous Cures, whose Infirmities and Diseases were notorious, and of a long standing: One, who had been blind from his very Birth; Another diseased with an Issue of Blood twelve Years; and a Third, troubled with a Palsy for thirty eight Years; so that there could be no possible Confederacy in a Case, where the Person cured was known to have laboured under that Distemper some Years before our Saviour was born.

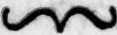
He so ordered the matter, that some of those he healed should immediately repair to the *Pharisees* and *Priests*, his inveterate and powerful Enemies, and give *them* an Opportunity of detecting the Fraud, if there were any; That
 others

others should be soon after called before the Sanhedrin itself, and strictly questioned about the Reality of their Cure; that so these Facts might have the Earliest and Strongest Confirmation possible from the fruitless Enquiry and Opposition of those, who were most loth to believe them. At least, when he healed any Person in private, without thus directing him to notify the Cure, he then enjoined Secrecy to him, on purpose to obviate all possible Suspicions of Art and Contrivance.

As he had *Lived*, so he *Died* in *Publick*; Expired upon a Cross, in the Top of an Eminence near *Jerusalem*. When Buried, he had a publick Guard set upon his Grave, and he Arose from thence in the Presence of that very Guard, and to their Astonishment. He appeared afterwards to five hundred Brethren at once, to the twelve Disciples frequently; Eat, Drank, and Conversed with them for forty Days, and was at last taken up into Heaven in their Sight, by a Slow and Leisurely Ascent.

In

SERM. In all Respects and Circumstances the

I.  Gospel of *Christ* shewed itself to proceed from the great *Father of Lights*, in whom is no *Darkness* at all; it was established upon Proofs, as Authentick, Publick, and Solemn, as can well be imagined; Bright, Evident, and Powerful, as the Sun at Noon Day. As its Founder once appealed to his Disciples, and said, *Handle me, and see; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*; so may the Doctrine itself make a like Challenge to its Enemies, and say; "Handle me, and see; for Delusion and Imposture hath not such Substantial Evidences, so Open, Ocular, and Sensible a Demonstration to boast of, as I have." — *This thing was not done in a Corner.*

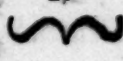
Luk. xxiv.
39.

II. Secondly, Having thus briefly Explain'd and Illustrated the Truth contained in these Words, I shall now apply myself to (what I chiefly intended) the drawing from thence those several Useful *Observations* and *Improvements*, with which it will furnish us. And the

1. *First*

The Gospel openly published.

II

I. *First Use* I will make of it, shall SERM.
be, to shew from thence, how great an I.
Advantage the Christian Religion hath, 
on this Account, over all other Religions,
whether true or false; not excepting
even the Dispensation of *Moses*.

'Tis true, scarce any Religion ever set
up in the World, without pretending,
sooner or later, to derive its Authority
from Miracles. But then, either those
Miracles (as they are call'd) have been
acted confessedly in Secret; or, if they
are said to have been done in Publick,
yet the Account, which was given of
them, came too late to deserve Credit,
or to leave room for a Disproof. And
in *Both* these Cases the Pretence to them
is very suspicious.

Thus, in the first Instance, *Numa's*
Nightly Conferences with a Goddess,
was a Figment, for which the People of
Rome had His Word only; the Truth of
the whole Transaction was resolved into
his single Testimony. And such was
Mahomet's vain Boast of his receiving the
several Chapters of his *Alcoran* from
2 the

SERM. the Angel *Gabriel*; for he wrought no

I. *publick* Miracle to enforce this *private*
 one; nor did he, that we can learn, pretend to the Power of working any. On the contrary, when Miracles were demanded of him, he at first (as his Followers have done ever since) appealed to the *Alcoran* itself, as to the greatest and most convincing Miracle; which was written (he said) in such a manner, as to carry upon it the plain Stamp and Evidence of its own Divine Authority. And this was the Only way, in which he could make out his Intercourse with the Angel *Gabriel*.

Thus again, the several Idolatrous Religions, in the *East* and *West Indies*, are said to have received their Sanction from Miracles done by the first Authors and Founders of them: But then the Reporters of these Facts are so much later than the Facts themselves, that 'tis impossible to have any Rational Assurance concerning the Reality of them: [Their *Mango-Copal*, *Amida*, *Brama* and *Zaca* are supposed to have atchieved Wonders]

at

at a time, when there was no way of SERM.
transmitting Accounts of them to Posterity, but by Memory alone, and some
thousands of Years before there could be
any written Monuments of them. Now
this, I say, is to build the Proof of Di-
vine Truths upon the *Certainty* of some
Accounts, whereof Men can *never be*
certain; it is to establish the Belief of a
Revelation upon *Things done*, or said to
be done, *in a Corner*, and which require a
new Revelation, to make *them* Credible.

The *Jewish* Religion was indeed published by God in a very open and solemn Manner, before a whole Nation, with Thunders and Lightnings, and the Sound of Heavenly Trumpets, on the Top of Mount *Sinai*. Yet still Infidelity finds room to object, that the Truth of this Revelation depends upon the Testimony of Friends only; and that the Scene of it is laid in a Place, where no body *could* be present, but the Persons concerned to support the Account, whether True or False. And should any of these Persons have been inclined to contradict it, yet they

SERM. they could not; because the whole Race
 1. of them perished in the Wilderness, e'er
 a Correspondence was as yet open'd between them, and any Other People.

Such Objections, 'tis true, are of no Weight, laid in the Balance with the Evidence given for the Truth of those Facts; yet it is some Advantage to the Proof of Gospel Miracles, not to be liable even to these little Exceptions, and on no side to lie open to any Doubts or Suspicions whatsoever. And from hence we may take Occasion to consider also in the

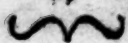
2. *Second* place, how inexcusable They are, who, notwithstanding that open, Incontestable manner, in which the Divine Authority of the Gospel was manifested, continue still to stand out against it; to Resist, and even to Deride the Utmost Efforts made by an Omnipotent Arm towards asserting the Mission of *Jesus*; to parallel them with the Mock Wonders of Satan, and the Impostures of False Prophets; and to insinuate, as if they were all equally done by Collusion.

sion. Such was He, whose *Name* ought SERM.
not to be mentioned without Reproach, ^{I.}
and whom *therefore* I shall not mention; 

but his *Words* are these: "If we look
" (says he) upon the Impostures wrought
" by Confederacy, there is nothing,
" how impossible soever to be done,
" that is impossible to be believed. For
" Two Men conspiring, the One to seem
" Lame, the other to cure him with a
" Charm, will deceive Many; but Many
" conspiring, One to seem Lame, Ano-
" ther to Cure him, and all the rest to
" bear Witness, will deceive more."

Which was intended to suggest, that the
Miraculous Cures recorded in the Go-
spel, were not really *Cures*, but *Cheats*,
and concerted between the seeming Ob-
jects and Authors of them; though the
Relation of several of those Cures be, as
I shewed before, so circumstanced, as to
make this Account of them not only Ri-
diculous, but Impossible. He might as
well have pretended to explain the Mira-
cle of our Saviour's giving Eyes to the
Blind, by reasoning on the Medicinal
Virtues

SERM. Virtues of the Clay and the Spittle employed on that Occasion.



The Men who talk at this rate (as, I fear, many Men now do, and that Openly, and *not in a Corner*) who can bring themselves thus to confound the plainest Marks of Truth and Falshood, Reality and Imposture; and to impute the most Clear and Demonstrative Proofs that ever were given of a Divine Power, to Confederacy and a Juggle; such Men, I say, are *inexcusable* upon all the Accounts of right Reason, and good Sense; and *incurable* by all further Methods of Proof that can possibly be addressed to them: They are Infidels, not because they want sufficient Grounds of Conviction, but because they resolve not to be otherwise. To no purpose is it to dispute with them about these *Foundations* of our Faith; to no purpose is it to Exhort, Beseech, Persuade, or Reprove them: *Their Eyes are shut, that they cannot see; and their Ears stopped, that they cannot hear; and their Hearts hard as the Nether Mill-stone.* Our Reasonings of this kind may indeed be
of

of some Use, in respect of *Those*, who SERM.
are yet untainted with the Principles of I.
Infidelity; and may serve to keep such
free from the Infection: But, to suppose
that any Good can be done by them upon
Those, who pretend to have weighed the
Evidence of the Gospel in a Balance,
and to have found it light; is a Suppo-
sition, fit only for those to make, who
have not tried it. A

3. *Third* thing, which we learn from
the Doctrine of the Text, is, to satisfy
ourselves of the Vanity of those Pre-
tences which are made to Miracles in the
Romish Communion. The Members of
it boast very much of mighty Signs and
Wonders wrought by some Canonized,
and some Uncanonized Saints; their Le-
gends, their Sermons are full of them;
even their great Advocate lays such a
Stress upon the Number and Kinds of
them, as to make the *Glory of Miracles*
One of the fifteen *Notes*, by which that
Church may be discerned to be the only
true Church of *Christ*. But now, as Con-
fidently, and *Publickly*, as they make
VOL. III. C these

S E R M. these Boasts of Miracles, we may ob-

I. serve, that the Miracles themselves are
 said to have been done very *Privately* in Religious Houses, and Places of Secrecy and Retirement; in Remote Regions of the World, whither no body will go to disprove them; in Superstitious Countries, where no Man hath a Mind, or Leave to examine them. And these are Circumstances, which smell strongly of Imposture and Contrivance; for why should Things designed for publick Use and Influence, be thus transacted in the Dark, without Witnesses? A *Miracle* is, in the Nature of it, somewhat done for the Conversion of Infidels; it is a *Sign*, *not to them that believe, but to them that believe not*: And yet it so happens, that Popish Miracles are generally done at *Home*, before Believers, where there is little or no Need of them, or Doubts concerning them: Or if *Abroad*, yet they are placed at such a convenient Distance, as not to lie within reach of Confutation. In *China* and *Japan* these Wonder-workers may pretend to have done

1 Corin.
xiv. 22.

done as many Miracles as they please, SERM.
without the Fear of a Discovery; in *Spain* I.

and *Italy* they may venture, now and then, to set up for them, where there are so many always ready to favour their Pretences, and to run into any Pious Fraud that can be contrived for them. But in Heretical Countries (as they term Ours) they are very shy, and sparing of their Talent this way; and still, the more Heresy there is in a Country, the fewer Miracles are heard of there. How can a Man choose but suspect these Odd Stories, told under such suspicious Circumstances? How can he be blamed for not entertaining them? For, as our Saviour's Brethren once reasoned with him (and they Reasoned right, though they Applied it wrong) so may we with One of these Pretenders to Miracles:

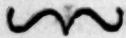
There is no Man doth any thing in Secret John vii.

*and He himself seeketh to be known openly;*⁴

if Thou do these things, shew thyself to the World. And whoever totally declines

this Trial, must not expect to have any Credit given, either to the Miracles he

SERM. pretends to have done, or to the Message he brings.

I. 

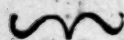
But the most absurd Pretence of this kind, and the most opposite to the Doctrine delivered, is, that famous Miracle of the corporal Presence in the Eucharist; which is done so much in the dark, that no body ever *did* or *can* see it, either *before*, or *after* it was done, or even *while* it is doing; no, not the Doer himself, as loudly as he may boast of it. The Miracles of the Gospel are so many Appeals to the *Senses* of Men; but this is a strange *New* kind of Miracle, which is perfectly *invisible*. To say, that it must be received by Faith, that we must *believe* it to be a Miracle, is to destroy the very End and Design of Miracles; which are Works done, in order to procure the Belief of somewhat else; and are not therefore themselves to be believed, and taken for granted. In a word, it is a Miracle, the doing of which is so utterly a Secret, that it wants another Miracle to prove it to be one. And yet of all things in the World, it is the

the most incapable of being proved this SERM.
way; for Miracles being, as I said, Ap- I.
peals to our Senses, and Transubstanti-
ation a plain Contradiction to them;
the Calling in of a Miracle to evince
the Truth of this Doctrine would be (as
One very justly reasons) “ to prove to a
“ Man by what he sees, that he doth not
“ see what he sees.” Either therefore
the pretended corporal Presence is no
Miracle; or, if it be one, we are still
Excusable in not admitting it, since it
comes to us in a way so very Singular,
and demands our Assent against the Te-
stimony of Sense, upon the Reports of
which all other Miracles are founded.
Again,

4. *Fourthly*, the Doctrine discoursed
of teaches us likewise to reject all Pre-
tences to the Spirit, to private Visions,
and inward Illuminations, by which En-
thusiastical or designing Men endeavour
to establish their own particular Opini-
ons, and to give them a sacred Authori-
ty. *Should* these Strange things they tell
us, be true; yet they are transacted *pri-*

SERM. *vately*, between God and their Own

I.



Souls, and cannot therefore reasonably be made a Foundation for the Publick Reception of any Doctrine, or Opinion: [For whenever God intends to establish any thing openly, he gives Open Proof and Evidence of it; his Notice reaches always as far as he designs to Extend his Revelation; and They therefore, who have no Sure Sign or Notice, that a Truth is revealed, cannot in reason be obliged to entertain it. Thus it would be, I say, supposing these Visions, and Revelations alledged, were really *true*; whereas we have indeed the best ground in the World for suspecting them to be *false*;] since it is evidently contrary to all the Divine Methods of acting, with which we are acquainted, that God should give a Man a Commission to publish a new Doctrine, and not give him wherewithall to manifest the Authority

Joh. ii. 31.

of his Commission to Others. *If I bear witness of my self, my Witness is not true,* says our Saviour; it is probably not true in itself, it is certainly not necessa-

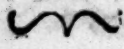
ry

ry to be embraced *as true*, by those, to SERM.
whom I propose it; and therefore it fol- I.
lows, *The Works that I do, they bear* 
witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Ver. 36.

me. The Miracles which a Man performs, are the only convincing Arguments of his being inspired; and his Own Affirmation in this Case, when divested of these Proofs, let it be never so Peremptory, cannot reasonably induce a Belief of what he affirms.

Thus (for instance) when the Dispute was in the Church of *Rome* between the Two Orders of *Franciscans* and *Dominicans*, about the Immaculate Conception; One Side had visions and Revelations *for* it, and the Other Side had Visions and Revelations *against* it; but Neither Side thought themselves obliged to take the Word of the Other; and the rest of the World, that stood by, did not think themselves obliged to take the Word of Either; but believed, or disbelieved the Immaculate Conception, according as Reason, Scripture, and the Authority of Tradition seemed to determine them,

S E R M. and not according to the Proportion of

I. Visions and Revelations, vouched *for*, or
 *against* it.

5. It will be yet a *Fifth* Improvement of what hath been laid down, to Observe from thence, how it comes to pass, that Miracles have been so long discontinued, and do rarely, very rarely, appear in these Latter Ages of the World. They were performed at first in so Conspicuous, Exuberant, and Convincing a Manner, as to render a continual Repetition of the same Proofs utterly needless. Had indeed these *first* Evidences of a Divine Power been displayed before a *Few* only, or before *Many*, but *Suspected* Witnesses, it might have been requisite perhaps to repeat them often in succeeding Times; [as often perhaps as any single Convert to Christianity was to be made:] But being originally wrought, as you have heard, in the Face of the Sun, before a whole Nation of Witnesses, and those Witnesses Enemies; the Certainty of them was so well established, and transmitted to After-Ages, as that no
 Fair,

Fair, Impartial Considerer should be SERM.
able to doubt of it; and such an one, I.
having no Reason to dispute the Truth 
of *Former* Miracles, could have no Reason,
no Occasion to demand *New* ones.
God governs the *Moral* World, as he
doth the *Natural*. He made it indeed,
and ordered it, at first, by Miracle;
but he steers and conducts the Affairs of
it ever since, by standing Rules and
Laws, and by the Ordinary Ministry of
Second Causes; And thus he establish-
ed the Truth of his Revelation, at the
Beginning, by Miracle; But, that being
once done, he suffers things now to go
on in their Regular Course, without of-
fering every day Motives of the same
Kind to Men, but appealing to those
which he hath proposed already; which
he knows to be sufficient, and knows
also, that if they do not suffice, no o-
thers will; according to that Remark-
able Decision of our Lord's, That such
as *bear not Moses and the Prophets* (i. e. Luk. xvi.
reject a Revelation already well attested 31.
by

SERM. by Miracles) would not be persuaded,

I. *though one arose from the Dead.* Farther,



6. *Sixthly*, from the General Drift and

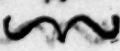
Tenour of the Argument we have been handling, it may be justly collected, that the more any Doctrine affects *Secrecy*, and declines Tryals of any Sort, the more Reason we have to Suspect, and

1 Joh. iv.
1.

to Examine it: *Beloved, believe not every Spirit* (says St. John) *but try the Spirits, whether they be of God;* and most particularly, those Spirits, which desire to be believed without being tried: For this looks, as if they were afraid of being brought to the Test; and *Fear* generally arises from a Consciousness of Guilt, as the same Apostle, in this very Case, argues. *Every one* (says he) *that doth Evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd; but he that doth the Truth, cometh to the Light, that his Deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Joh. iii.
20, 21.

This Reflection cannot but once again put us in mind of those Articles of the
Roman

Roman Catholick Faith, by which it SERM.
stands distinguished from the Faith of I.
all other Christians. We are not allow- 

ed to doubt of them, or to reason upon
them. They are to be received impli-
citly, without any particular Discussion
and Enquiry: From the great Doctrine
of Infallibility they proceed, and into
that they are finally resolved: *As the* Ecclef.
Rivers run into the Sea, into the Place i. 7.

*from whence the Rivers come, thither do
they return again.* And how can That
which hath the Stamp of unerring Au-
thority upon it, become the proper Sub-
ject of any Man's private Debates and
Reasonings? Now this is the greatest
Prejudice imaginable against the Truth
of the Doctrines of any Church, or the
Sincerity of its Pretences: For if what
it proposeth to us, be True and Reasona-
ble, why should it decline the Exami-
nation and Judgment of Reason? If all
be pure Gold, without Alloy, how
comes it thus to fly the Touchstone?
'Tis the Property of Error only to sculk
and hide its Head; but Truth we know
is

SERM. is open and barefaced; like our first Parents, in the State of Innocence and Happiness, *Naked, but not ashamed.* And therefore, though it be very unreasonable in the Church of *Rome* to impose her Doctrines upon us, without allowing us to examine them; yet it is not unreasonable in Us to reject these Doctrines, thus proposed, even without Examination.

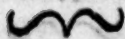
The same may be said of those Wild Opinions set up by Fanaticks and Enthusiasts, as Dictates of the Spirit, and which they will suffer to be tried by the Spirit only; not by the dead Letter of Scripture, or by Carnal Reasoning. There needs no more than this very Consideration, to convince us of the Absurdity of their Pretences; for if *Scripture* and *Reason* were for *Them*, They would not be against *Scripture* and *Reason*: Men do not use to decline the Arbitration of their Friends.

Far different from this is the Conduct of that excellent Church, to which we belong. She deals Openly and Fairly, brings

brings all her Doctrines to the Light, and s E R M.
invites all her Members to search and en- 1.
quire into them. She desires nothing

more, than to be tried at the Bar of *un-
byassed* Reason, and to be concluded by
its Sentence: *She knows, that her Testi-
mony is true*, and that the Truth of it
will appear the more, the more it is sift-
ed. Even in those Mysteries, which She
proposes as Objects of Faith, divinely
revealed, She pretends not to shut out
the Use of Reason, but only cautions us
to exercise it Soberly and Discreetly, and
to keep it within its due Bounds: Not
to reject a Divine Truth, because we are
ignorant of the particular *Manner* in
which it may be made out; Not to rea-
son from the Properties of Finite to those
of Infinite Beings; Not to pretend to
find Contradictions in Points, the Depth
of which we cannot Fathom or Compre-
hend. Under these Restraints, She en-
courages us to use our Reason, in the
Discussion of Mysteries, as freely as we
please; and She questions not, but that
the more freely we use it, the more Rea-
son

SERM. son we shall find to believe those Mysteries, and to revere them.

I. 

Would to God, All Men dealt as fairly with Her, as She deals with all Men! She would not *then*, by Ill Tongues and Pens, be traduced, as guilty of Pious Cheats and Priestcraft; Things, which She detests utterly, and hath done more toward Exposing them, where they are practised, than any of Those who make the Loudest Noise with them. She would not *then* have those Accusations of Imposture and Design, laid at her Door, which She herself hath so often and justly charged on the Church of *Rome*; Accusations stolen, by Her Adversaries, from Her matchless Writings against that Church, and applied to Her, without Ground or Colour, without Sense or Reason. But our Comfort is, That our Case, in this respect, is like that of good *David*, when he appealed to God, and said,

Psal. lxi. *The Reproaches of Them that Reproached Thee are fallen upon Me.* These Enemies of our Church are equally Enemies of all other Churches, and all Religions; only

ly Ours happens to be the fairest Mark, ^{SERM.}
because it is Uppermost; for were any ^{I.}
other set up in the Room of it, still the
same Cry of Holy Frauds and Priestcraft
would be heard against *that* also from
the Mouths of Profligate Persons, in Li-
centious Times. To cut off all Occasi-
on, as much as can be, from those who
seek Occasion, let us be sure, all of Us,
who are Members of this Excellent
Church; Let us be sure, I say, which is

7. The *Last* thing I have to recommend
to you from the Text, to make our Pra-
ctice of the Gospel, like the first Proofs of
it, Conspicuous and Plain; and endea-
vour, with all our Power, to recommend
the Doctrine we embrace, to the *Hearts*
of Men, as Openly, and Powerfully by
our good Lives and Actions, as the first
Planters of it did, by their Miraculous
Performances. So shall we best put to
Silence the Ignorance of Foolish Men;
and be able in the most convincing, and
effectual manner, to make an Answer to
our Blasphemers.

SERM. The *Profession* of the true and pure

I. *Doctrine of Christ*, and a *Practice* suitable to that *Profession*, are both often, in the *New Testament*, compared to *Light*. Like *That*, they display their bright Beams, and diffuse their quickening Influence; Enlightening and Enlivening all that is near, and far off; Dissipating the Mists of Vice and Ignorance, and Discovering the Hidden things of Darkness. As to our *Profession* of the pure *Doctrine* of the Gospel, that it sufficiently resembles *Light*, is manifest and notorious: Let us resemble it also in as *Illustrious* and distinguishing a *Practice*, and by *walking worthy*, every way, of that *Vocation wherewith we are called*. Let us resolve to be (as I trust we are) the *Purest Church* upon Earth, for our *Manners*, as well as for our *Doctrine*; in One respect as well as the Other, a *Light placed on a Candlestick*, and not under a *Busbel*; a *City set upon an Hill*, that cannot be hid. In a word, Let Our *Light* so shine before Men, that They, seeing our good Works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

Ephes.
iv. 1.

Matth. v.
14, &c.

SERMON

THE
BAPTIST'S Message to JESUS,
AND
Jesus's Answer explained.

VOL. III.

D

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is at hand
and it is the will of God that
all men should be saved
and come to the knowledge of the truth
For the Son of Man came to save
that which was lost

For the Son of Man is the Son of Man
and he is the Son of Man
and he is the Son of Man
and he is the Son of Man
and he is the Son of Man
and he is the Son of Man

BAPTIST'S MESSAGE TO JESUS
AND

Jesus's Answer explained.

THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE TO JESUS
AND
JESUS'S ANSWER EXPLAINED.

THE BAPTIST'S MESSAGE TO JESUS
AND
JESUS'S ANSWER EXPLAINED.

Vol. III. D

*The Baptist's Message to Jesus, and
Jesus's Answer explained.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

ROLLS

December 24. 1710.

MATTH. xi. 3.

*Art Thou He that should come? or do we
look for another?*

AT this time of *Advent*, particular-SERM.
ly dedicated by the Church to a II.
Devout Commemoration of our Savi-
our's Coming in the Flesh, and set apart

D 2

to

SERM. to prepare us for a worthy Celebration

II. of the approaching Feast of his Nativity;
 it may be no Unsuitable Entertainment
 to your Thoughts, to suggest to you some
 Reflections on this Passage of Scripture,
 and those others which introduce, ac-
 company, and explain it.

When John had heard in Prison (says the Evangelist) the Works of Christ, he sent Two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou He that should come? or do we look for another? That is, Art Thou the Messiah, the great Redeemer of Israel, whose Coming was foretold by the Prophets, and is now expected with great Impatience by the whole Body of the Jews, and before whom I am sent, as his Forerunner and Harbinger? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go, and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The Blind receive their Sight, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And Blessed is He, whosoever shall not be offended in Me! As if he had
 said,

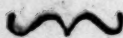
said, " Judge Ye yourselves, by the SERM.
" Works which I now perform, whe- II.
" ther I am the Messiah or not, or what
" Reason there can be to doubt of my
" Divine Mission and Authority."

This Transaction is extremely remarkable, and will afford much useful Matter to our Reflections, in relation both to the Enquiry made by the Baptist, and the Answer returned by our Lord to that Enquiry.

And First, as to the Enquiry itself, it I.
may be matter of just Surprize to us, that the Baptist should, so long after he had continued discharging the Office of Christ's Harbinger, put such a Question as this to our Saviour, *Art Thou He that should come? or do we look for another?* For could John be Ignorant of our Saviour's Character? Could he entertain the least Doubt of it? He, who had formerly Baptized Christ, had seen the Spirit descend on him in the Form of a Dove, and heard the Voice from Heaven thus testifying concerning him, *This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well*
D 3 *pleased?*

SERMON. *pleased? He, who had borne Record of*

II.



Joh. i. 34.

Ver. 29.

our Lord more than once, that he was the Son of God, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World? Could He possibly afterwards be under any Degree of Hesitancy or Doubt, in relation to our Saviour's Character? Certainly he could not; and therefore we must look out for some other Reason of his sending this Message, besides the Desire of satisfying himself; and that plainly was the procuring Satisfaction to those by whom the Message was sent, his Disciples and Followers, who, notwithstanding all the Asseverations of John to this purpose, continued still Incredulous;—We may suppose, for these Reasons.

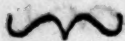
1. Because they saw their Master imprisoned, and now likely to be put to Death, for preaching up the Kingdom of God, and the Coming of the Messiah; and could not apprehend, that, had Jesus been that Messiah, he should have wanted Power, or Will to employ that Power for the Baptist's Deliverance. And yet so far was this from being the Case,

Case, that our Saviour doth not appear S E R M.
 once to have made an honourable Men- 11.
 tion of *John*, till after the Disciples, who
 came upon this Errand, had left him.
 Then indeed, and not before, the Evange-
 list tells us, *Jesus began to say unto the* Matt. xi.
Multitudes, What went ye out into the Wil- 7.
derness to see? and to take that Occasion
 of enlarging on the *Baptist's* Character,
 and the Dignity of his Office.

2. They might have observed, that
 our Saviour had not himself hitherto
 asserted his Right to that Title, but de-
 clined all Occasions that had been given
 him, of directly and openly owning him-
 self to be the Messiah; which Conduct,
 though necessary, in order to carry on,
 and complete his Ministry, without In-
 terruption from the *Roman* Powers, was
 yet what the Disciples of *John*, who
 had heard their Master preaching up the
 Kingdom of the Messiah without any
 Disguise, could not understand; nor ac-
 count for any otherwise, than by suppos-
 ing that *Jesus* arrogated not that Honour
 to himself, as being conscious, that it did

SERM. not belong to him. And these Suspici-

II. ons might be raised, by their observing



3. The manner of our Saviour's Life and Conversation, which was so very different from that of their Master's, and had so much less an outward Appearance of Sanctity in it. *The One came neither Eating nor Drinking*, delighted in Solitude, and lived in the Practice of the highest Rigours and Austerities; *The Other came Eating and Drinking*, lived in the World, and according to all the innocent Customs of it; conversing freely and promiscuously with all Sorts of Men, even with Publicans and Sinners. And therefore they were tempted to think, that He, who was so far beneath their Master in what *they* called Perfection and Holiness, could not be so far above him in his Character and Office, as, if he were the Messiah, he must have been.

Mat. xi.
18.

These Doubts, it is probable, that *John* had very often endeavoured to remove: But finding that they still stuck with his Followers, he took the last and best

best way of satisfying them, by sending them on this Message to *Jesus* himself, and giving them by that means an Opportunity of being Eye and Ear Witnesses of his Works, and of his Doctrine, which, he knew, would effectually convince them.

S E R M.

II.



Thus much concerning the *Enquiry*:
We are now to consider,

Secondly, The *Reply* which our Saviour made to it. In which Reply there are Two things observable; the *Manner*, and the *Matter* of it. II.

As to the *Manner* of it, we see, it is not *Direct* and *Positive*; but so ordered only, as to give them an Occasion of answering that Question themselves, which they had proposed to our blessed Saviour. This Method, as it was agreeable to his Conduct in Other Cases, and requisite to secure him from the Accusations of those who watched his Words, whenever he taught in publick; so had it this farther Use in it, that it imprinted a Conviction on the Enquirers, after the most gentle, reasonable, and winning way,

SER M. way, without commanding and extorting their Assent by an Authoritative Declaration of the Truth, which he thus invited them to receive. The Proper Motives and Evidences only were laid before them; and They afterwards were left to frame the Conclusion from thence; that so their Faith, which was to entitle them to such Glorious Privileges, might be a Free and Voluntary Act, and the Test of an Ingenuous and Well-disposed Mind.

As to the *Matter* of our Saviour's Answer, *Three* things there are which deserve to be weighed by us:—The remarkable *Gradation* and *Rise* there is in the Particulars there mentioned: The *Appositeness* of it in relation to the Enquirers: And the *General* Force and Evidence of the Argument contained in it.

I. To begin with the first of these: Go and shew John again, says our Saviour, those things which Ye do hear and see; and then he particularly mentions the Bodily Cures he wrought on the Deaf and

and Blind, the Lame and the Lepers. He adds beyond this a yet plainer Instance of a Miraculous and Divine Power,—

S E R M.
II.


the Dead are raised up; and he seems to advance still somewhat farther, when he says, that even *the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them*. An Instance of Goodness and Condescension, with which the *Jews* had before been but little acquainted! The Prophets of that Nation had been sent always to great and mighty Persons, to reclaim their Princes and Rulers, and to reprove Exemplary Wickedness in high Places; and, to manifest the Authority of their Commission to them, were sometimes armed with the Power of Miracles. But nothing could be more wonderful, than to see a Prophet in *Jewry* preaching to the Poor and Meek; addressing himself to the Lowest and Meanest of Men; exhorting them to Virtue, removing their Prejudices, and rectifying their Errors! Such Applications amidst that People were so unusual, and exceeding rare, that our Saviour thought fit to conclude the Enumeration

S E R M. meration of the several Proofs of his Mis-

II. *fion with these two Particulars, The Dead are raised up, says he, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*

2. The *Appositeness* of our Saviour's Answer, in relation to the Persons who made the Enquiry, is what we are next to consider. And here

First, we may observe, what a *Natural* Occasion he takes of resolving their Doubts, from what he was even then saying and doing in their Presence. *Go, and shew John again, those things which Ye do hear and see:* That is, you come to learn of Me, whether I am the Messiah: Your Master hath often told you, that I am; but ye will not believe him. To *Him* you should have given Ear, who is my professed Harbinger and Herald; to *Me* it belongs not so properly to proclaim my own Titles, and assert my own Authority. For

Joh. v. 31. *if I bear Witness of myself, my Witness is not true.* It is liable to Suspicion, and likely to be of little Weight and Authority with You. If Ye suspect your Ma-

ster's

ster's Testimony of me, much more will ye suspect that which I give of myself. S E R M. II.

Behold therefore the Testimony of God! Joh. v. 36.

for *the Works which I do* (which ye now see done before your Eyes, they) *bear Witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* If ye still doubt, who I am, why ask ye Me? ask the Works, which you cannot doubt whether I do, or not; and they shall tell you.

Secondly, Nothing could be better contrived to satisfy these Enquirers, of our Saviour's Preeminence over the *Baptist*, than these Wonders which they saw him perform, and heard him now appeal to; since they knew very well, that their Master had not the Gift of Miracles, nor pretended to the Power of doing them; and could not therefore but see, that his Ministry was inferior to that of *Christ*, and subordinate to it; especially since from the *Baptist's* own Mouth they had learnt, that the *doing of Miracles* should be one illustrious and discriminating Mark of the Messiah; for so much, I think, that Passage in the Gospel of St. *John* suffi-

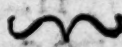
SERMON. sufficiently implies,— *Many who resorted*

II. *unto Jesus, said, John did no Miracles;*
 Joh. x. 41. *but all things which John spake of this*

Man, were true; that is, though he did none himself, yet he prophesied that Jesus should do them; and when his Disciples therefore saw that Prediction fulfilled, they were able themselves to answer their Own Question.— Art Thou He that should come? or do we look for Another? Farther

Thirdly, The Particular Facts, which our Saviour here mentions, in order to insinuate his Preeminence over the Baptist, are extremely well suited to that Purpose. They are all Acts of Beneficence and Kindness, wrought for the Service and Benefit of Men either for the Instruction of their Minds, or the Healing of their Bodies. And this, he tacitly suggests to them, was a far nobler Employment, and carried in it a much greater Degree of Perfection and Use, than the Solitary Life and Rigid Austerities of the Baptist, for which his Disciples held him in such high Veneration.

He



He hints to them the Reasons, for which he lived and conversed thus publicly and familiarly, and applied himself to Men in the most Humane, Easy, and Affable Manner, without distinguishing himself from Others by any rough and frightening Appearances, any thing Extraordinary and Singular, either in his Look, Attire, or Behaviour (for which the *Baptist* was remarkable) and he leaves them (even in *this* respect) to consider, whether his Character was not superior to that of their Master, and his Administration ordained to more Excellent Purposes; and therefore he concludes his Reply with Words, which have an Eye to those Prejudices they had entertained against him on this Account; *Blessed are They, who are not offended in Me!*

Beyond all this, it is, in the

Fourth place, extremely remarkable, that the Answer of our Lord to these Enquiring Disciples is expressed in Words taken from a Prophecy of *Isaiab* concerning the Messiah. And *Isaiab* was, of all the Prophets, *He*, in whose Writings

SERM. Writings the *Baptist's* Followers were

II. the most conversant, and for whom they
 ~~~~~ had the greatest Esteem and Reverence;  
 inasmuch as their Master was there more  
 particularly pointed out, the Person and  
 Office of this Cryer in the Wilderness  
 was there more exactly described, than  
 in any other Part of the sacred Volume.  
 And therefore what *this* Prophet testified  
 concerning the Messiah, was best suited  
 to work those into a Reception of  
 him, who had been led by his Testimony  
 to discern even their Master himself,  
 and to become his Followers.

Now the Places here referred to in  
*Isaiah*, are these, *chap. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good Tidings to the Meek.* Εὐαγγελίσασθαι τοῖς πτωχοῖς, as it is in the Translation of the Septuagint; and the very same Phrase is employed here in the Text, πτωχοῖς εὐαγγελίζονται, *The Poor have the Gospel preached unto them.* The rest of the Particulars may be almost entirely supplied from another Passage in the



xxxv<sup>th</sup> of the same Prophet, v. 4, 5, 6. SERM.

*Behold, your God will come with Ven-* II.

*geance, even God with a Recompence; he will come and save you. Then the Eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf shall be unstopped: Then shall the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb shall sing.*

It is very probable that the *Baptist* himself might have an Eye to this Passage, when he sent his doubting Disciples with this Question to our Saviour, *Art thou He that should come?* Since we find there a Promise, within the Compass of a few Words, twice repeated, that *God would come*, and *would come* to save his People; and therefore our Saviour, very appositely sent them back again to the same Prophet in his Reply, and taught them by that means to understand the true Drift and Meaning of their Master's Question. It is as if he had said, You believe not the *Baptist's* Testimony, that I am *He who should come*; yet surely *Isaiab*, upon whose Authority ye have received the *Baptist* him-



SER. M. self, will find Credit with you; and *He*

II. hath thus prophesied of me.



Every way, we see, the Answer of our Blessed Redeemer was so wisely and graciously contrived, as to meet with all the Prejudices, and dispell all the Doubts of these Enquirers, and to lead them into an Acknowledgment that they had found the Messiah whom they sought, *Him who was to come*, and were no longer to look for another.

3. Nay these Words carry in them (as I in the Third place observed) an Argument of more general Use and Influence, and propose to us all the Chief Marks and Characters of such Miracles, as are sufficient to confirm the Authority of any Person pretending to be sent by God; and all of which concurred in the Miracles done by our Messiah; as any unprejudiced Person, who compares them together, may easily perceive. I shall but just mention them, as they are hinted to us in the Words of our Saviour's Reply, and leave the further Consideration.

consideration of them to your private Meditations. Now the

SERM.  
II.

1. Mark and Character of such a Miracle, as can be the proper Evidence of a Divine Mission, is, that it be above the Known Powers of all Natural Causes: And such were all the Instantaneous Cures here mentioned; and particularly the raising Men from the Dead.

2. A Second Character is, that they be done publicly and in the Face of the World, that there may be no room to suspect Artifice and Collusion. And such were the Wonders to which our Lord appealed. — *Go tell John again, says he, those Things which ye do hear and see; which are done here before your Eyes, and in the midst of a Great Multitude.*

3. A third Thing requisite is, that the Doctrine which they are brought to vouch, be every way worthy of God, and fit thus to be Sealed and Attested by him. *The Gospel is preached, says our Lord; the most perfect Scheme of Morality that ever Mankind was acquainted with.*

SERM. 4. It is yet a further Recommendation of such Miracles, If they carry in them Marks not only of an Astonishing Power, but of Good Will also, and Beneficence to Men; as the Healing of the Blind, the Lepers, and the Lame, here in the Text, manifestly did.

II. 5. If the very doing of them was foretold, and the Time and Person declared by the Spirit of Prophecy; for so I have shewn that our Saviour, in his Account of the mighty Works here done, referred himself to the Predictions of *Isaiah*.

6. If there be no Appearances of Self-interest and Design in the Worker of such Miracles; and this Objection our Lord also removes, where he says, that the *Poor had the Gospel preached unto them*; the *Poor*, to whom no Man would apply, who proposed to himself Temporal Views and Aims, which *They* (alas!) could no ways forward.

Thus have I endeavoured to open to you, very largely, the Significancy of each Word in this Important Passage; and



and particularly the wonderful Address S E R M.  
of our Lord, in applying himself to II.  
those who resorted to him for Instruction, 

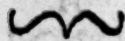
and in reasoning them into Conviction  
by Arguments and Suggestions peculi-  
arly accommodated to the Notions and  
Apprehensions they were under. —

Our Chief Business indeed, from such  
Places as these, is, to inculcate into  
the Minds of *Christians* the *Practical*  
Lessons of Piety contained in the Gospel;  
to convince them of the Reasonableness,  
Beauty, and Usefulness of those Pre-  
cepts; and to inflame them with ardent  
Desires of excelling therein. However,  
such *Speculative* Enquiries as these have  
also their Use, and may sometimes de-  
serve a Place in your Minds; as contri-  
buting to raise your Attention in perus-  
ing the several Parts of Holy Writ, and  
to improve and quicken you in your  
Manner of meditating upon them; and  
as assisting you towards a Discovery of  
those Inestimable Treasures of Divine  
Wisdom, which are hidden in that Sa-  
cred Volume. We generally, I fear,



S E R M.

II.



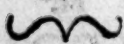
consult the Scriptures too negligently, and reflect on them too superficially, with no greater Degree of Attention and Care, than we employ in perusing mere Human Composures (and I would to God we employed always as much in the One Case as in the Other!) We do not sufficiently consider, *Who* it is that speaks to us there, nor *What* it is that he says: What Weight, What Fulness of Sense, What Excellent Variety of Matter, and Wonderful Depth of Thought there must needs be in Words dictated by, or at least spoken under the overruling Influence of Infinite Wisdom. And therefore, though the Scriptures are read every Day in our Churches (and sometimes perhaps consulted in our Closets) yet we make but a slow Proficiency towards a True Taste, and a Clear Discernment of those high Truths which are contained in them. We dwell on the Letter only, on what offers itself to us at the first View; but we do not make ourselves acquainted with the Life and Spirit of them. And yet for this Reason,

son, among Others, these Holy Writings were left us by God, that we might, as good *David* speaks, *exercise ourselves in them Day and Night*, have perpetual Matter for our Enquiries into, and Improvements in the Knowledge of things Divine, and drink always of these Waters of Life, without either allaying our Thirst, or exhausting the Spring from whence they flow.

The Difference between the Holy Scriptures, and Other Writings, is much the same, as that between the Works of Art and Nature. The Works of Art appear to most Advantage at first; but will not bear a Nice and Repeated Examination: The more curiously we pry into them, the less we shall admire them. But the Works of Nature will bear a thousand Views, and Reviews, and yet still be Instructive, and still Wonderful. In like manner, the Writings of mere Men, though never so excellent in their Kind, yet strike and surprize us most upon our first Perusal of them; and then flatten upon our Taste by de-

<sup>s</sup> E R M. grees, as our Familiarity with them increases. Whereas the Word of Revelation is like its Author, of an Endless and Unsearchable Perfection; and the more we look into it, and revolve it in our Minds, the more Reason still shall we find to admire and adore the Wisdom of the Great Revealer of it.

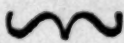
II.



I have therefore hinted to you some Thoughts concerning the Drift of our Saviour's Reasoning, and the peculiar Appositeness of it in relation to the Persons who made the Enquiry in the Text; that I might excite you from thence to meditate in like manner on the Other Parts of the Book of God, which are *equally profitable for Doctrine, and able to make us Wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim.  
iii. 15.

Wherefore, *search the Scriptures*, for as in *Them ye have Eternal Life*, so have ye Room also for an Eternal Growth and Improvement in that Knowledge, which leads to it; in that Knowledge, which we can here attain unto in Part only, but shall hereafter, when the Veil of this  
Flesh



Flesh is done away, more perfectly comprehend; and the more earnestly we aspire after it, and labour for it in this State of Imperfection, the more Exalted a Degree of it shall we possess in Another World. And do Thou, “ Blessed  
“ Lord, who hast caused All Holy  
“ Scriptures to be written for our Instruction, grant that we may in such  
“ wise read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and  
“ Comfort of thy Holy Word we may  
“ embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of Everlasting Life, which  
“ thou hast given us in our Saviour *Jesus Christ.*”

ON



And John's answer is found

1. Let us go away, more perfectly con-  
fident, and the more carefully we  
pursue it, and labor for it in the  
face of opposition, the more blessed  
the result of it shall be to us in An-  
other World. And so I say, "Blessed  
be they who have called All Holy  
Scriptures to be written for our in-  
struction, that we may in such  
a way, mark, learn, and inward-  
ly digest them, that by patience and  
comfort in the Holy Word we may  
embrace and ever hold fast the pre-  
cious hope of Everlasting Life, which  
God has given us in our Saviour Je-

su Christ.

O.Y.

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ON THE  
INCARNATION  
OF OUR  
*L O R D.*

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ON THE  
INCARNATION  
OF OUR  
LORD

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A  
S E R M O N

O N T H E

*Incarnation of our Lord:*

Preach'd at the

R O L L S

On Christmas Day, 1710.

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MATTH. xi. 6.

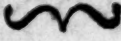
*Blessed is He whosoever shall not be of-  
fended in Me.*

A ND can any Man then be offend-SERM.  
ed in Thee, blessed *Jesu!* who III.  
hast undertaken, and done, and suffered ~~~~~  
so much for all Men! Who willingly  
emptiedst



SERM. emptiedst thyself of all thy Glory, left-  
 III. est Heaven and the Bosom of thy Father,  
 for our Sakes; and, when thou tookest  
 upon thee to deliver Man, didst not (as  
 at this time) abhor the Virgin's Womb!  
 Can a Design of so much Goodness ever  
 miscarry by the Folly of those, on  
 whose very Account it was undertaken!  
 Can such a Message of Love (of a Love  
 astonishing and infinite) be rejected!—  
 Canst Thou thyself, the great Messenger,  
 be received any otherwise, than  
 with the open Arms and Hearts of all  
 thy Creatures, for whose Redemption  
 thou wert thus made Flesh, and dweltst  
 among Us!— Is it possible for any *One*  
 of them to be any ways offended in  
 Thee!

Yet so it is, Blessed Lord! that from  
 thy first Coming in the Flesh to this  
 time, there have been unreasonable Men  
 all along, that have taken Offence at  
 Thee!— And there will not fail to be  
 such within the Pale of Christianity it-  
 self, even till thy second Coming to  
 Judge the World!— Thy Doctrines  
 have

have been complained of, as laying too S E R M.  
great a Restraint on Human Nature, as III.  
hard and unpracticable Sayings! — Thy   
Mysteries have been doubted of, disput-  
ed against, and ridiculed by Men of  
perverse and proud Minds, who are re-  
solved to believe nothing farther than  
they can thoroughly and clearly compre-  
hend it! — Thy Person itself, the Cir-  
cumstances and Way of thy Coming  
have been an Offence unto Many! — To 1 Cor. i.  
*the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the* <sup>23.</sup>  
*Greeks Foolishness!* A constant Occasion  
of Falling to all Godless and Sinful  
Men, whose high Minds are not brought  
into Captivity to the Obedience of Faith,  
nor made fit for the Reception of the  
Truth, as it is in *Jesus!* — But blessed  
are all they (have thy Holy Lips pro-  
nounced) who (in none of these Ways)  
are offended in Thee!

As to the two former Ways of being  
offended in *Christ*, on the Account of  
the Difficulty of practising those Duties  
he has enjoined, and believing those Ar-  
ticles of Faith he hath proposed, I  
shall

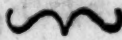
SERM. shall not at present enter into the Consideration of them. The Festival we are now

III. celebrating, determines me rather to point my Reflections on the Offence which has been taken at the *Person* of Christ, the *Method*, and *Manner* of his Coming amongst Us. — The Objections of which Kind I shall briefly propose, and answer; that so having rooted and grounded ourselves in a firm Belief of the Doctrine, we may, with the more Assurance, make those several Improvements of it, which will be profitable unto Godliness.

It hath formerly by *Porphry* and *Celsus*, and ever since by their Successors, the open or hidden Enemies of Christianity, been thus argued :

That the Doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God is *Unreasonable* and *Incredible*; inconsistent with the clear Notions we have of the unlimited Perfections of God, and the finite Properties of Man; between which there is so Wide and Eternal a Difference, as seems to render them incapable of being joined



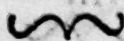
ed together in one and the same Person SERM.  
or Subject. For how can Wisdom, Per- III.  
fection, and Happiness itself be mixed   
with Folly, Infirmary, and Misery?  
What Union can there be between what  
is Finite, and that which is Infinite?

But were it conceivable, how the Di-  
vine and Human Nature could be Unit-  
ed into *One Person*; yet is it not (say  
they) *reasonable* to believe that such a  
*Method was* actually taken. For surely  
there were *other* ways beside this, of  
Restoring-lapsed Man to the Favour of  
God, and that Happiness which he had  
forfeited, and of taking away the Sins  
of the World: The unlimited Mercy  
of the Divine Nature was of itself suf-  
ficient to compass this End, and forgive  
this Debt, without requiring any Ran-  
som; and unless a *God Incarnate* were  
*absolutely and indispensably* requisite to  
free Mankind from the Guilt, and Do-  
minion of their Sins, it is no ways rea-  
sonable to think, that Recourse was had  
to so extraordinary a Remedy.



SERM.

III.



Now, as to the first Part of the Objection, the *Impossibility* of an Union between God and Man in the same Person or Subject, 'tis a bold, and a presumptuous Plea. For who is he, among the Reasoners of this World, that is able precisely to determine, in such obscure Points as these, what is *possible* or *impossible* to be accomplished by Almighty Wisdom and Power? Are our Notions of these two Beings, *God* and *Man*, so full every way, and distinct and clear, as to satisfy us, that such an Union is in itself repugnant, and altogether impossible? Would we impartially consider, what passes within our Minds, when we employ them in such nice Disquisitions as these, we should find, that all that passes there is Darkness and Confusion; and that we can discern too little of either of these Natures, to be able to pronounce, with any Assurance, that it is *impossible* for them to be joined together in One Person.

We have no just Idea indeed of the *Manner*, in which such an Union may be

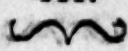
be effected; but so neither have we of S E R M.  
the *Manner* of that Union, which is III.  
between our Souls and Bodies. An   
Union, which we can as little explain,  
or comprehend, as even that of the De-  
ity with the Humanity; and which yet  
we can no more doubt of, than we can  
of our own Being and Subsistence. Will  
the most Keen and Piercing Wit among  
the Sons of Men say, that he perceives  
plainly, how a *Corporeal* can be joined to  
an *Incorporeal* Being; and what are those  
common Ties and Ligaments that hold  
them; how they act upon each other;  
move, and are moved by Turns; and  
what Kind of Contact that is, by which  
such Motions are mutually communi-  
cated? No, these are Secrets, which  
we can no ways, by any Strength of  
Thought fathom; and which perhaps  
we should have been apt to imagine  
inconsistent and impossible Speculati-  
ons, had not *Experience* taught us;  
that Things *are* really so, though we  
cannot possibly find out *how* they *should*  
be so.

SERM. Had the Spirits of Men been once

III. unbodied, and had God revealed to them in that State of Separation, that he designed them for another Station in a Lower World; and, in order to it, would clothe them with gross and sensible *Matter*, and make them act continually in Concert with fleshly Organs, and with Dependence upon them, No doubt but one of these *Forward Reasoners* would have concluded immediately, that the Thing proposed was *Unphilosophical* and *Absurd*.— And therefore, that either the Revelation did not really come from God, or that this could not be the Sense of it.— For how could Body and Spirit, Things so totally different, any ways meet together, and compose one entire Subject? or how could they, when thus met, have any possible Influence on each other?

These therefore are immodest and unjustifiable Ways of Reasoning, which would persuade us to reject Truths, on the Account of some *Supposed Impossibilities*, of which it is *manifestly impossible*



*possible* that we should have any clear S.E.R.M.  
and adequate Conception. And there- III.  
fore in all such Cases, it becomes not   
us to say, what can, or cannot be done,  
or what the Nature of Things will, or  
will not admit of. The Short and only  
Sure Point, upon which Controversies  
of this kind must turn, is, to see what  
God in his Holy Word has assured us  
concerning them.

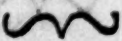
As to the second Part of the Obje-  
ction, That there were *Other* Ways of  
bringing about the Pardon of Sin, and  
the Salvation of Man; far be it from us  
to prescribe to God, or to say— That  
Infinite Goodness and Wisdom itself  
*could* have found out *no Other* Expedi-  
ent. But since *this*, and *no other*, was  
made use of by God, we must needs  
think it the *most proper* of *Any*, and the  
best proportioned to those Ends and Pur-  
poses, for which He designed it. And  
though it becomes us rather implicitly to  
adore the Divine Wisdom, than curi-  
ously to enquire into the Reasons, and  
boldly to sound the Depths of it; yet is



SERM. there some Light afforded us in Scripture, whereby we may discover a mighty *Fitmess* and *Congruity* between the *Method* that was used, and the *End* that was brought about by it.

Guiding ourselves therefore by the Discoveries made to us on this Head in Holy Writ, we may safely venture to say—It was fit and requisite, that our Redeemer should be *God*, that, by the Infinite Dignity of his Person, the Value of the Sacrifice, which he made of himself in the Flesh, might be so far enhanced, as to become a sufficient Atonement for the Sins of the whole World: That the *Laws*, which he should publish, might carry in them the utmost Obligation and Force: That his *Doctrine* might have the highest Authority: That we being assured of his absolute Security from Sin, might look up to his *Example*, as to a *perfect Pattern* of Holiness; and in all things, without *Doubt*, or *Fear*, implicitly follow his Steps.

It was fit he should be *God*, that he might give an Instance of *Infinite Condescension*

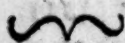
*descent* and Love toward us, and might S E R M.  
from thence engage us to Love and Obey III.  
him also, *without Bounds*: That he might   
be enabled in our behalf to Vanquish Sa-  
tan, and all the Powers of Hell, and  
erect a Spiritual Kingdom in the Hearts  
of Men, by triumphing first over all the  
Strength, and Cunning, and Malice of  
our Spiritual Enemies.

It was highly Expedient also, that he  
should be *Man*, that our Offences might  
be repaired in that *Nature* which com-  
mitted them: And *as by one Man's Dis-* Rom. v.  
*obedience, many were made Sinners; so by* 19.  
*the Obedience of One Man, Many might*  
*be made Righteous.*

That he might be Qualified from  
thence, to be a *Merciful and Faithful* Heb. ii.  
*High Priest in Things pertaining to God,* 17.  
and a proper *Intercessor* with him for  
Man, whose Infirmities he had tried,  
whose Needs he had been sensible of;  
and, having *himself suffered and been*  
*tempted,* might be able and willing to Ver. 18.  
*succour Those that are tempted.*

S E R M.

III.



*Lastly*, That by appearing in Human Form, he might make a Difference between the rigorous and astonishing Dispensation of the *Law*, and that milder one of *Grace*: Coming to us in the most familiar and winning way: Instructing us in our Duty like one of us: And proposing to us a lively and Full Example of what he taught, in what he did and suffered for us.

These are some of the Accounts which God has hinted to us in Scripture, why his Infinite Wisdom was pleased to pitch upon this Way, rather than any other, of reconciling Man to himself, And yet after all the Accounts we can give ourselves of it, we cannot but confess it to be an Abyss of Mercy, which neither *We* nor *Angels* are able to pry into; and which God alone, who contrived it, can fully explain and comprehend.

Let us forbear therefore to wade farther into the Depth of this great Mystery of *God manifest in the Flesh*; and let us satisfy ourselves with believing it, as God has revealed it, without Indulging

our



our Curiosity in an unprofitable Search S E R M.  
 after the Reasons, which induced God III.  
 to order the Stupendous Work of our   
 Redemption in so inconceivable a Man-  
 ner: And let us proceed to draw from  
 thence those plain practical Improve-  
 ments, which may render it profitable  
 unto Godliness, and with which it will  
 readily furnish us.

And the first, and most natural Use  
 we are to make of it, is, to raise to our-  
 selves from thence Matter of *Thankful-*  
*ness and Spiritual Joy.* *Behold, I bring* Luk. ii.  
*you,* said the Angel to the Shepherds, 10, 11.  
*good Tidings of great Joy which shall be*  
*to all People: For unto you is born this*  
*Day in the City of David a Saviour,*  
*which is Christ the Lord.* And these in-  
 deed are the best Tidings that ever God  
 sent, or the World received: Tidings  
 of no less than Freedom from the Guilt  
 and Punishment of Sin; of a Way o-  
 pened to Repentance, and the Favour  
 of God; to Peace of Conscience in this  
 World, and Everlasting Happiness in  
 the next,

Before



S E R M. Before the Coming of Christ, all the

III. Account we could have of these things from the Light of Nature, went no farther than this.— That the Breach of any of God's Laws brought Guilt along with it; and that Guilt made us liable to Punishment.— Whether God, upon any Considerations, would ever remit this Punishment, was more than mere Reason could possibly tell us. For the Justice of God certainly required, that Sin should be followed with Punishment: Nor was this inconsistent with the Goodness of God, which was otherwise sufficiently manifested to us. Under these kind of Dark and Uncomfortable Reasonings were we left, till Christ *the Sun of Righteousness* arose with Healing in his Wings, and published the Gospel of Repentance, and Remission of Sins. All Thanks and Praise therefore be given to him, that our Tongues can possibly express, or our Hearts conceive! *Abraham*, at a mighty Distance, and upon a very Dim and Imperfect View of it, *rejoyced to see this Day*: The Angels, who them-

Mal. iv.  
2.

John. viii.  
56.

themselves had no Interest in this Deliv- SER M.  
erance, yet were highly pleased with III.  
the Prospect of these Blessings it derived  
on their Fellow Creature Man; and  
therefore sang that Hymn on this Occa-  
sion, which the Evangelist has record-  
ed.—*Glory be to God on High, on* Luke ii.  
*Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* 14.

And shall not *We*, for whose Sake this  
Peace was sent on Earth, and to whom  
all this Good-will was meant, shall not  
*We* also give *Glory to God on High, and*  
*rejoyce before him with Reverence?* Sure-  
ly this is News, at which (as *Isaiab*  
prophecies of the Miraculous Effects that  
should take place in the Kingdom of the  
Messiah) *the Lame Man should leap as an* Isa. xxxv.  
*Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb should* 6.  
*sing.*

A second Improvement that should be  
made of this Doctrine, is, to raise our  
Love to God from hence, to all the De-  
grees of which it is capable.

For Love surely deserves Returns of  
Love; and the highest Instances of  
Love, the highest Returns of it. Now

in

SERM. *in this was manifested the Love of God to-*

III. *ward us, because that God sent his only be-*

*gotten Son into the World, that we might*

*live through him. Herein is Love (as*

*S. John continues his Argument) Not*

*that We loved God (that is, loved God*

*first, and by that means drew down his*

*Love upon us) but that He loved us (an-*

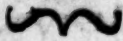
*tecedently, freely) and sent his Son to be*

*the Propitiation for our Sins.*

Had God sent the meanest Attendant in the Court of Heaven, to publish abroad the good Tidings of his free and voluntary Pardon of Sin, should we not have entertained it as a Message of unspeakable Love! How much more, when he sends his Son, his only begotten Son, on this Errand! When he sends him to partake of our Nature, and of all the Infirmities, Miseries, Shame, and Pain that attend it; and at last to be made a Sacrifice for our Sins by the very Hands of those Men, for whose Sake he left Heaven! This raises the Motive so high, that our Lips are faint when we speak of it; and our Heart melts away almost under



der the Sense of that excessive Burthen SERM.  
of Love which lies upon us. III.

But how strangely is the Force of   
this Motive weakened by those who  
make *Christ* a mere Man, not the Eter-  
nal Son of God, sent out to us from the  
Bosom of his Father! For at this rate  
the *Love of God* toward us abates very  
much; and then, I am afraid, *Ours* to-  
ward Him will proportionably abate  
with it. For the higher Apprehensions  
we have of God's Antecedent Love to  
Man, the stronger will our Endeavours  
still be to raise our Affections up to a  
Pitch some way suitable to those Ap-  
prehensions.

So that, whether these Men have, by  
this Expedient, lessened the Difficulties  
of their *Faith*, or not (which is Matter  
of Dispute) sure we are, that they have  
evidently lessened the Argument for their  
*Love* by it.

Another plain Use we are to make of  
this Doctrine, is, to give us an *high Sense*  
of the *Dignity of our Nature*, and an  
heartly



SERMON. hearty *Displeasure* at those Sins which  
 III. debase and dishonour it.

Behold now, as the Apostle to the  
*Hebrews* argues, is that Prophecy of the  
*Psalmist* concerning *Man* fulfilled in your

Heb. ii. 7. Ears. — Thou hast crowned him with  
*Glory and Honour*, and hast set him over  
*the Works of thine Hands*: Thou hast put  
*all Things in Subjection under his Feet*;  
 that is, *The Human Nature*, by its As-  
 sumption to the *Divine*, is now advanc-  
 ed far above Principalities and Powers,  
 and every created Being: Nay, it is, in  
 the *Person of Christ*, become an *Object of*  
*Adoration*, even to Spirits of the first  
 Rank and Order. For, as the same Apo-  
 stle interprets another Passage of the  
 Heb. i. 6. *Psalmist*, *When God brought his first be-*  
*gotten Son into the World*, he saith, *Let*  
*all the Angels of God worship him.*

Should not such a Reflection as this  
 make us resolve to do nothing beneath  
 that Nature, which God has so highly  
 honoured? Not to pollute it with vile  
 Affections and Lusts; Not to set it up-  
 on mean and unworthy Pursuits, and  
 on

*Incarnation of our Lord.*

79

on *minding Earthly Things*; but to have SERM.  
our *Conversation in Heaven*; from whence III.  
also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Je- Phil. iii.  
sus Christ, who shall change our Vile Body, 19, 20, 21.  
that it may be fashioned like unto his Glo-  
rious Body?

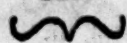
A Sense of Birth and Noble Blood  
will often keep Men from doing things  
beneath themselves, when no other Mo-  
tive can restrain them: And shall it not  
be sufficient to preserve us from every  
Evil and defiling Work, to consider our  
near *Alliance* with God himself, by the  
Intervention of the *Man Christ Jesus*?  
Surely such a Consideration should en-  
gage us, after the most powerful Man-  
ner, to *purify our Natures*, even as his 2 Cor.  
is pure; and to *cleanse ourselves from all* vii. 1.  
*Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit.*

And as God's assuming our Nature  
should make us reflect often on the Dig-  
nity and Worth of it, and resolve not  
to defile *That* with base and brutish  
Enjoyments, which *Christ* hath thus En-  
nobled and Sanctified; so on the other  
hand,

The

S E R M.

III.



Heb. i. 3.

The *Condescension* also of the Son of God, in this *Mysterious Work* of our Redemption, should infuse into us a Spirit of *Universal Humility*. Since He, *who was the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, emptied himself willingly of all that Glory, to become a Vile and Miserable Creature for the Salvation of Men; what a deep Lowliness of Mind ought *We* (in Imitation of him) to carry about us, through the several Stages of Life, and the different Administrations of Providence? How willing should it make us to undertake any Work, to be seen in any Office, though never so mean and low, that tends any way to the Good and Welfare of Mankind? It is the Great Apostle's Argument, *Let nothing be done, says he, through Strife, or Vain-glory; but in Lowliness of Mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every Man on his own things, but every Man also on the Things of others. Let this Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being in the Form* of

Phil. ii.

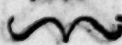
3, 4, 5, 6,  
7, 8.



*of God, thought it not Robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the Form of a Servant: And being found in Fashion as a Man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross.*

SERM.

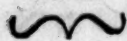
III.



A *Fifth* thing I would recommend to you, from considering the Incarnation of *Christ*, is, that we would take care to trace all the Steps of that *Example* which he set us in the *Flesh*; and which that he might set us, was one great End of his taking our Nature upon him. And, Oh! let not *this End* be frustrated, by our neglecting to look up to that admirable Pattern of all Virtue and Holiness in the *Life* of the Immaculate *Jesus*, which the four Gospels have afforded us! A *Life*, as useful to be handed down to us in all its Circumstances, as his very *Precepts* themselves: For in *that* he exemplified his Precepts, and gave an Instance of the Practicableness, the Beauty, and the Power of them. Such an Instance, as charms the



SERM. Eyes, and engages the Hearts of all  
 III. that behold it; and will, if well attend-



ed to, have the same Influence upon us, that the enjoying the immediate View of God, Face to Face, once had upon *Moses*: It will make us shine with Part of that Lustre we are looking upon, and transform us into some Kind of Resem-

2 Cor. iii.  
 18.

blance with it. *We all with open Face, beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, that is, viewing carefully the Image of our Lord's Life, as it is drawn to us in the Glass of the Evangelists, and studying to express it in ourselves, we shall be changed (as it follows) into the same Image from Glory to Glory; from one Degree of Virtue and Perfection to another, till at last we arrive at the very Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

Ephes. iv.  
 13.

I shall mention but one Improvement more of the Doctrine of the Day, and then conclude.—And that is, that we should take Occasion from hence, highly to esteem and reverence the Evangelical Dispensation: To value and prize that  
 Everlasting

Everlasting Gospel, which *Christ* sealed SERM.  
to us with his Blood, above all other III.  
Books, Religions and Philosophies; a-  
bove all other Methods of Living and  
Dying that have been ever taught, or  
practised in the World.

Were there nothing contained in it  
but that one *faithful Saying*, worthy of 1 Tim. i. 15.  
all Acceptation, that *Christ Jesus* came  
into the World to save Sinners; even that  
should recommend it more to us, and  
make us take greater Delight in perus-  
ing it, than turning over all the Volumes  
of Wit and Reason, all the Discourses  
of Moral Virtue, all the Treatises of  
Arts and Sciences, which the Learned  
Part of Mankind among the *Gentiles*  
have afforded us: We should count them  
all but Dross and Dung, in comparison  
of the *Excellency of the Knowledge of* Phil. iii. 8.  
*Christ Jesus.*

But the best Expression of our Reve-  
rence towards this Gospel, is, to com-  
ply with the Terms of it. Let us re-  
member, that the last Scope of the whole  
*Mystery of Godliness*, is, to oblige Man-  
kind

SERM. kind to be good and virtuous; and to  
 III. lead Lives answerable to such bright  
 Discoveries and Motives, as Revelation  
 has proposed to us. And therefore let  
 me exhort and beseech every one of you  
 this Day, as ye would not (as far as in  
 you lies) frustrate the Design of our Sa-  
 viour's Birth; as ye would not baffle  
 the Truth of those Prophecies concern-  
 ing the Innocence and Purity of the  
 Lives of Men under the Reign of the  
*Messiah*; and as ye would not *hereafter*  
 wish, that your Saviour had never been  
 born, nor you yourselves neither; to be  
 careful for your Parts to answer the  
 great End of his Incarnation, and to live  
 as becomes a People, that have been thus  
 Redeemed of the Lord.

*For how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so  
 great Salvation?*

---

**TEMPTATIONS**  
**NOT**  
**IRRESISTIBLE.**

---

**G 3**



THEMPTATIONS

NOT

IRRESISTIBLE

C 2

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*Temptations not Irresistible.*

---

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

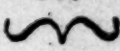
St. James's Chapel,

February 16. 1710-11.

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I COR. x. 13.]

*God is faithful, who will not suffer you  
to be tempted above that ye are able,  
but will with the Temptation also make  
a Way to escape.*

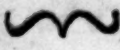
**A**MONG the various Methods S E R M.  
made use of by Men, to justify IV.  
or extenuate their Sinful Compliances, 

G 4

there

S E R M. there is no Plea more common in the  
 IV. Mouths of Libertines, than This; That,  
 ~~~~~ considering the Weakness of Human  
 Nature, and the Strength of some Temptations, 'tis not to be expected that we should get the better of them. The strict Rules of Virtue are indeed enjoined us; but in this State of Frailty and Infirmary, we must (say they) be sometimes allowed to deviate from them. We are solicited so powerfully by Evil Objects *without*, and pushed on so violently by Evil Inclinations *within*, that 'tis impossible but that *both* these should now and then prevail, against the best Reasons, and the strongest Resolutions. This is an Opinion with which Sensual Men usually flatter themselves; wish true first, and believe true afterwards. But how Vain and Groundless an Opinion it is, the Determination of the Apostle, in the Words of the Text, may inform us, *God is faithful, &c.*

The plain Purport of which Words is, " That God adjusts always, and
 ~~~~~ " proportions the Strength of Tempta-  
 " tions

" tions to our Power of resisting them **SERM.**  
" and never lays a greater Burthen up- **IV.**  
" on us, than he either *finds*, or *makes*   
" us able to bear."

A very Important and Comfortable Truth! of great Use to support the Truly Good and Pious under the Various Evils of Life, and Allurements of Sense, which surround them; and to reclaim the Bad, who indulge themselves in Vice, upon the supposed Impossibility of being entirely Virtuous and Blameless, from their False and Carnal Reasonings.

In order therefore to Strengthen and Encourage the One, and to Convince and Undeceive the Other, I shall make it my Business in what follows,

First, To Explain and State this Truth. **I.**

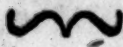
Secondly, To Confirm it by sundry **II.**  
Ways of Proof, with which Experience,  
Reason, and Revelation will furnish us.  
And then

Thirdly, To



S E R M.

IV.



*Thirdly*, To Apply it, in a few plain Words of *Exhortation* and *Reproof*, such as the *Argument* naturally suggests, and the *Time* will permit me to make use of.

I. *First*, I shall Explain and State this Truth.

And in order to it, I observe

I. That the Apostle is not speaking of the Powers of *mere* Human Nature, but of Human Nature *Divinely assisted and supported*. He says not, that a Man, of *himself*, hath Strength enough to resist all Inducements to Sin, and to stand his Ground (as the *Pelagians* afterwards vainly talked) but that he shall be *enabled* to do this, in virtue of a *Superior Principle*, and by the Help of *Divine Grace*; which, in such Exigencies, shall surely be bestowed on him. God (he says) *will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able*.—Intimating, that we *should* be tempted above what we are able, if God did not interpose and help us. And again,

again, *God will with the Temptation also* SERM.  
*make a Way to escape;* Which implies, IV.  
that we often could not escape, unless   
God made a Way for us.—I observe

2. From the Subject of the Apostle's Discourse, that neither is it his Intention to affirm, that we shall, by any Measure of Divine Grace imparted to us in this Life, be so far enabled to baffle all *manner* of Temptations, as to live *perfectly Spotless and Sinless*; but only, that we shall be preserved from falling into *Great and Heinous, into Deliberate and Presumptuous Sins*; such as, when Committed, throw us out of the Favour of God, lay waste the Conscience, and require a particular and Solemn Repentance, to render us capable of Salvation. For such was that Sin, which the *Corinthians*, at this time, were in danger of Committing, a Compliance with Idolaters, in partaking of their Idol Feasts. Alas! it cannot be otherwise, but that, in the very best of Men, Sins of Omission and Infirmary should abound. Let us stand never so much upon our Guard, there  
*will*

S E R M. *will be Lapses, there will be Inadverten-*

IV. *cies, there will be Surprizes: All there-*  
 fore that we can in this State of Imperfection depend on, is, That through the Grace of God we shall be preserved from such Enormous Offences, as are inconsistent with a Sincere Piety, and Habitual Holiness; not that we shall be totally freed from Human Frailties and Failings.— Farther.

3. This *Supernatural Assistance*, which enables us to resist Temptations, *supposes* our Use of *Natural Means*, and our *Concurrence* with it to the best of our Power. 'Tis a *Co-operating Cause*, which acts only in *proportion* to our own Endeavours; but imparts not its *Extraordinary* sustaining Strength and Virtue, unless where we exert, and make use of that *ordinary* Strength we have. Temptations therefore to the most Gross and Grievous Sins may, in *some* Circumstances, be *Irresistible*; if it were Originally our *own* Fault, that we were brought into *those* Circumstances; if, for want of that due Vigilance and Care, which



which we were *obliged* and *able* to em- S E R M.  
ploy, the Temptation overtook us. IV.

For Instance; If a Man of resolved Sobriety, should be so far at any time off his Guard, as to Indulge himself in any unjustifiable Degree of Excess, he may, by that means, be inevitably betrayed into some of the Ill Consequences of Intemperance; If a Person, by Nature warm and passionate, shall mix in high Disputes, or engage in Games of Chance, 'tis not to be expected that he should preserve himself free from Offence. His Passions will, of Course, be agitated, and inflamed; his *Heart* will now and then *think*, and his Mouth *utter perverse things*. But there is no Objection from these, and such Instances as these, against the Doctrine laid down, which affirms all Temptations to be Conquerable. For this is to be understood only of *such* as we Unavoidably fall into, not of *such* as we voluntarily seek. It is not supposed, that we should have Power always to *Resist*, unless we before-hand do what is in our Power to *Shun* Temptation.

Prov.  
xxiii. 33.

These



SERM. These are the several Restrictions, un-

IV. der which the *Truth* implied in the Text must be understood. Which having thus *Explained* and *Stated*, I go on now, in the

II. *Second Place, to Confirm by Various Ways of Proof, such as Experience, Reason, or Revelation will suggest to us.*

And the first Way of proving it, shall be by *Experience*.

In vain do Libertines pretend, that Human Nature is too weak and frail to resist, what we have Authentick Proof, that, as weak and frail as it is, it *hath* oftentimes resisted. There is no Temptation, either of Desire, or Fear, of Pleasure, or Pain, nothing that can either *Allure* us to Sin, or *Scare* us from our Duty, but what hath been actually withstood and baffled by those Holy Men and Women that have gone before us: And what *hath* been already done, *may* be repeated; unless Human Nature be

a different thing *now*, from what it was *then*; which no one, I suppose, will pretend. SERM. IV.

Can a Man look up to the Examples of the Primitive *Christians*? Can he reflect on the Lives and Deaths of the Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors of old; on what they *did*, and what they *suffered*; and pretend to say after this, that any Solicitations of Sense are irresistible, any Part of Virtue is impracticable?

Were they not Men of the *same* Passions and Infirmities as we are? Had they not the *same* Sense of Pleasure and Pain? Were they not surrounded with the *same* tempting Objects? And had they *any* Assistances, in order to stand their Ground, but from that *Holy Spirit*, who will assist *Us* also? And why then should *We* be forced to yield to those Difficulties, over which *They* triumphed?

Let us consider some few of those many plain Instances of this Kind, which are recorded in the Holy Story. The Temptation of *Example* and Reigning

SERM. ing *Custom*, is one of the strongest that

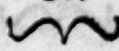
IV. beset Human Nature; and yet it hath  
 been resisted, and defied, in the utmost  
 Degree of Strength, wherein it is possible for us to imagine it.

*Lot* lived in a *Great* and *Filthy* City; so *Filthy*, that, as *Great* as it was, Ten Good Men could not be found there, to rescue it from Destruction. And yet, amidst all that bad *Company*, He continued untainted, and preserved his Innocence. *Noah* lived, not only in a *City*, but in a *World* entirely debauched; when

Gen. vi. 13. *All Flesh had corrupted its Ways*, and there were but *Seven* Persons (besides himself) left, Servants of God, and Lovers of Righteousness. And yet, notwithstanding this Universal Depravation of Manners, behold, how untouched he stood, and what a Character he bore!

Ver. 9. *Noah was a just Man, and perfect in his Generations, and Noah walked with God!* Will any Man after this, pretend, that it is impossible to withstand the Influence of *Ill Example*; and to live up to strict Principles of Religion and  
 Virtue,



Virtue, among Thousands, and Ten times S E R M.  
Ten thousands, that neglect and deride IV.  
them. 

The Temptations that arise from *Worldly Interest and Honour*, cannot possibly press harder upon any Man, than they did upon *Moses*. He might have lived in all the Splendor and Luxury of the *Ægyptian Court*, and enjoyed all the Advantages of it, would he but have complied with the Religion and Manners of the Place, and forgotten his Relation to a poor persecuted People: but he resolutely withstood all these Charms, and *when he was come of Years, refused to* Heb. xi.  
*be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter;* <sup>24.</sup>  
*choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season: esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Ægypt.*

*Ye have heard of the Patience of Job!* James v.  
No Man was ever tempted more sorely, <sup>11.</sup>  
than He, to distrust and deny Divine Providence, and to throw off all Thoughts of Religion. No Man, that we know



S E R M. of, except our Blessed Saviour, at once

IV. suffered so much, and deserved so little: yet hear, how, on his Dunghill, when despoiled of every thing, of his Health, his Possessions, his Servants, his Sons and Daughters, and Friends; hear, I say, how he expresses his entire Reliance on God, and his Absolute Resignation to him! *Till I die* (saith he) *will I not remove my Integrity from me. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Naked came I out of my Mother's Womb, and Naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!*

Job xxvii.  
5. xiii. 15.  
i. 21.

To these several *Scripture Instances*, I crave leave to add yet *One more*, relating to the *Passion of Revenge*; one of the most *Importunate and Violent*, that are incident to *Human Nature*; which yet we are sure is conquerable, under all the strongest *Temptations* to it, that can well be conceived, from the *Account of Good David*. He had *Saul*, his great *Enemy*, at his *Mercy*; an *Enemy*, that had

had often sought his Life, in the basest, S E R M.  
and most unmanly Methods, that had IV.  
*bunted* him (as his own Expression is) I Sam.  
*like a Partridge upon the Mountains:* xxvi. 20.

an Enemy that stood between him and  
a Throne; so that nothing was want-  
ed, but the taking off *Saul*, in order to  
*David's* Reigning. This Enemy, I say,  
he had an Opportunity of removing:  
The Followers of his Fortune proffered  
themselves to be the ready Ministers of  
his Revenge; and upon *Them* he might  
have laid the Blame of the Deed, and  
have been himself (to all Appearance)  
Innocent and Ignorant of it. This was  
a Temptation, which some Men would  
have called insuperable; and yet *He*,  
we find, actually withstood it, with so  
Resolute a Virtue, as the Eloquent Pen  
of *St. Chrysostom* is never more Eloquent,  
than when he describes it; particularly in  
that Homily, which is designed to shew,  
that *David's* Conquest of himself, in  
this Instance, was more great and glo-  
rious, than his Victory over *Goliath*. For  
in vain did that Son of Violence *Abishai*

SERM. push him on, by saying; *God hath de-*

IV. *livered thine Enemy into thine Hand this*

*1 Sam.*  
*xxvi. 8.*  
*&c.*

*Day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the Spear, even to the Earth, at once, and I will not smite a Second Time. His Honourable and Pious Return to this base Counsel was — As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him, or his Day shall come to die, or he shall descend into Battle, and perish: but destroy Thou him not: for who can stretch forth his Hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be Guiltless?*

From Unquestionable Accounts therefore it appears, that all the forest Tryals of Virtue, which can any ways happen, have been withstood and baffled by Men of like Passions with us, and may therefore be withstood and baffled still, with Equal Resolution and Innocence.

But because it may be said, that *Instances* do not conclude *Universally*: it is certain indeed, that whatever hath once been done, may be done again, by Persons endued with like Degrees of Holy Fortitude and Firmness: but it doth

doth not therefore follow, that I am ca- S E R M.  
pable of doing it, whose Infirmary per- IV.  
haps may be greater than *Other Mens*, in  
*This Particular* :

Because such Pretences may, I say, be made, I shall therefore proceed (farther) to Confirm the Truth laid down, by some General Reasonings, drawn from the *Nature*, either of *Temptation* itself, or of that *Gospel Grace*, which is to support us under it; or of *Man*, the Subject of that *Grace*; or of *God*, the bestower of it.

They who say, *any* Temptation is not to be conquered, did they consider what they said, would find, that they spake absurdly, and inconsistently. For a *Temptation* is only another Word for an *Experiment*, or *Tryal*; a Tryal, whether we will do, or forbear such a thing; whether we will comply with, or reject such a Proposal: and therefore it supposes it to be in our Power to do, or forbear; to yield, or not to yield; else it were *no* Temptation, *no* Tryal of us. We are not said to *Try*, *which* way a  
H 3 thing



SERM. thing will act, that is *necessarily* deter-

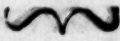
IV. mined to act *One* way beforehand. — To

say therefore, as Sensualists do, that *Some* Temptations are *not* resistible, is, when that Expression is examined, really to say, That *some* Temptations are *not* Temptations; for if they *are*, their very being *such* implies, that it is possible to withstand them.

What is *Grace*, but an Extraordinary Supply of Ability and Strength to resist Temptations, given us on purpose to make up the Deficiency of our Natural Strength to do it? And therefore, if our Natural Strength, together with this Divine Supply, be not now equal to every Temptation; the Grace of God may *thus* far be said to have been given us in *Vain*; in as much as it doth not, and cannot reach the *End* for which it is bestowed.

Is not *Man*, by Nature, a *Free* Agent? Hath he not Liberty and Will? The great Difference between him and Brutes, doth it not lie in this, That *they* are unavoidably constrained to act *One* way, while

while *He* hath always the Power of de- SERM.  
termining himself on *this* Side, or on IV.

*that*, of Choosing or Refusing? But 

now, if there be any such things as *Inducements* to Sin, that are altogether *insuperable*, there is an End of his boasted *Freedom*; for in *those* Instances, he acts as necessarily, as mechanically, as *the* Psal. xlix.

*Beasts that perish*. The great *End* of <sup>12.</sup>

Man is, to Glorify God, by Living according to the *perfect* Rule of right Reason and Virtue; and yet impossible it is, that he should ever attain *this* End, while he converses with Temptations, which he cannot surmount. Now all *Other* Beings (Animate, or Inanimate) have Powers, that enable them to fulfil the *Design* of their Creation: Is *Man* alone utterly destitute of these Powers? Is the Noblest Creature on Earth framed to *No End*? or (which is all one) under an utter Incapacity of reaching *that* *End*? Is *He* only incapable of arriving at any Degree of Perfection in *his* way, for whose Use and Service all those *other* Creatures were made, which are confes-

S E R M. sedly perfect in *Theirs*? If This be so, he  
 IV. is so far from being the Pride and Glory  
 of the Visible Creation, that he is the  
 Meanest, most Imperfect, and Contem-  
 ptible of Beings.

Once more. Let us consider the *Nature* and *Perfections of God*. He *is*, and *must* be Holy, Just, and True: and yet He neither *is*, nor *can* be Holy, Just, or True, if He places us under *Irresistible* Temptations.

How can He be *Holy*, who is the Author of Sin? And how can He *but* be the Author of Sin, who (according to the Libertines Scheme) hath so adapted the Frame of our Mind *within*, to the Impression of Evil Objects from *without*, that it is utterly *impossible* for us to withstand the Force of them? Is not this to have a direct Influence and Efficiency in producing Sin, so to order and dispose Second Causes, as that they cannot miss producing it? Now an Holiness that *permits* Sin to be in the World, and *bates* all the while what it permits, we are able to conceive: but an Holiness,



ness, which directly occasions Sin, is SERM.  
utterly inconceivable. IV.

Nor is the *Justice* of God less ble-  
mished by this Pretence, than his *Holi-  
ness*. For how can *He* be said to be *Just*,  
who (as these Men tell us) places us un-  
der *Irresistible* Temptations; and yet  
(as *He* himself assures us) will punish  
us for *not* resisting them; that is, makes  
us unavoidably obnoxious to Sin first,  
and then animadverts upon us for the  
Commission of it afterwards? Let any  
Man say worse than this of *Injustice* and  
*Cruelty*, if he can.

The Last Divine Perfection, concern-  
ed in this Dispute, is his *Truth*:—  
which cannot be maintained, if the Li-  
bertines Plea in this Case be true. The  
Promises of God made to us in Scri-  
pture are most Express and Full; That he  
*will perfect his Strength in our Weakness*; 2 Cor.  
that *his Grace shall be sufficient for us*; xii. 9.  
that he will *make us more than Conque-* Rom.  
*rors in all Temptations*; and, here in the viii. 37.  
Text, that he *will not suffer us to be*  
*tempted, above what we are able.* And  
he



SERM. *he is not a Man that he should lye, or as*  
 IV. *the Son of Man that he should repent.*

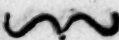
~  
 Numb.

xxiii. 19.

And yet *as Man*, and as the *Son of Man* is he made by the Favourers of this Loose Scheme; which is at the Bottom, built on a secret Distrust, that God will not, in some sharp and pressing Instances, be as good as his Word; but will leave us to be worsted, where he has promised to assist and strengthen us. Nothing can be plainer, than that he commands us, throughout his Gospel, to reject Temptations; to Live above *the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*; to be *perfect, even as he is perfect, and pure, even as he is pure*. To this Point all the Various Applications there made to our Hopes and Fears, all his Threatnings and Encouragements tend.

But now, if at the Time that he lays, and thus earnestly presses these Precepts upon us, he knows it is not in our Power to obey them: if he invites, if he woos, and beseeches us to do that, which he hath before-hand so contrived

us,

us, as to make it utterly impossible for SERM.  
us to do, he deals not as sincerely, and IV.  
fairly with *Us*, as he hath obliged us,   
under the Penalty of Eternal Wrath,  
to deal *One with Another*. That be far  
from Thee, O Lord; that be far from  
Thee to do; and as far from any of *Us*  
to think, or to say! No, God is not in-  
sincere, when he commands, urges,  
persuades us not to comply with sinful  
Solicitations; *Man* only is *insincere*, when  
he pretends he hath not Strength enough  
to master them.

Let us therefore place the Odious Re-  
proach, where it ought to lie.— Let us  
give Honour to the *Divine* Truth and  
Uprightness in laying these Commands  
upon us, by confessing *our own* Insin-  
cerity and Falseness, in endeavouring to  
palliate and excuse our Deviations from  
them. *Let God be true, and every Man* Rom. iii.  
*a Lyar.* 4.

Thus much for the Confirmation of  
this Truth, It remains that I should,

*Thirdly, Ap- III.*

## SERM.

## IV.

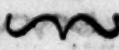
*Thirdly*, Apply it, in a few plain Words of *Exhortation* and *Reproof*, such as the *Argument* naturally suggests, and the *Time* will permit me to make use of.

And *first*, there is Matter of mighty *Comfort* and *Encouragement* arising from hence to the Sincerely Good and Virtuous; who may now walk on cheerfully in the Paths of Virtue, under these Reflections and Assurances; satisfied, that no Conflict shall happen to them in the Course of their Spiritual Warfare, in which their great Adversary shall be too hard for them; and, on that Account, easy and at rest in their Mind, with regard to the Various Trials and Evils of Life, that may, or may not befall them. *They shall not be afraid of Evil Tidings, nor dejected at the Thought of approaching Dangers: Their Heart is stablished, and shall not shrink; it standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.*

Psalcxii.

7.

Ver. 8.

Many are frightened from a brave and S E R M.  
resolute Practice of their Duty, by con- IV.  
sidering before-hand, that such and such   
Inconveniencies may possibly attend it,  
which they know not whether they  
shall be able to grapple with. But *why* Mat. viii.  
*are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* Is 36.  
not He that is *with* You, stronger than  
He that is *against* You? And hath he  
not promised, that his Strength shall  
be employed to support Your Weak-  
ness? *Hath he said it, and shall he not* Numb.  
*make it good?* Therefore, *why are ye* xxiii. 19.  
*troubled, O ye of little Faith?* Were we  
all thoroughly persuaded of this im-  
portant Truth, that *God will not suffer*  
*us to be tempted above what we are able;*  
were our Minds constantly possessed  
with a Lively and Vigorous Apprehen-  
sion of it, there are no Circumstances  
of Life so sad, no Evils so frightful,  
no Trials so sharp, but that we might  
look down upon them with Indifference,  
and in the midst of what either we ex-  
pect or endure, of felt or fancied Dan-  
gers, take to ourselves Words of Holy  
Assurance



SERM. Assurance with the Psalmist, and say,

IV. *I will not be afraid for Ten thousands of Temptations, that have set themselves against me round about: Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil: for thou art with me; Thy Rod and Thy Staff comfort me.*

Psal. viii.

6.

Pfalm

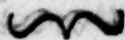
xxiii. 4.

Secondly, Here is ample Matter of Re-  
proof also to the *Hypocrite*, and the *Pro-  
fane* Person: both which, from a Prin-  
ciple opposite to the great Truth of the  
Text, would fain justify, or extenuate  
their sinful Compliances. Let not the  
*Hypocrite* then allow himself in a favou-  
rite Sin with the slight Hope, that *in this  
thing the Lord will pardon his Servant*,  
and that one small Fault will be over-  
looked among a Crowd of other good  
Qualities. Let him not pretend *Impo-  
tence*, in a particular Case, and expect  
to be believed when he says it, because  
he doth his Duty sincerely, and stands  
his Ground firmly upon other Occasions.  
This is all but *Pretence*: God, who can-  
not lye, hath assured us, that no Tem-  
ptation should overtake us, but what we  
should

2 King. v.  
18.

should be enabled to bear: and when he said, *no Temptation*, he made no Allowance for a *darling* Infirmity.

SERMON  
IV.



Let the *Profane* and *Dissolute* Person cease to affront God and Man by his Impious and Absurd Reasonings! Let it be enough, that he resolve, at any rate, to be *Impure* and *Lawless*; but let him not go on to *defend* his *Impurities*, by reproaching and vilifying Human Nature, and under That, the Wise Author and Contriver of it! If he is determined to live a Life of Sense, and to obey his Lusts, yet let him not boldly and openly justify it, by saying, that it is *necessary* for him to act as he does; and that *All* Men are, in *many* Points, though not perhaps in the very *same*, just as *He* is; as impotent every whit, and utterly disabled. For this is defending One Sin with another, and a much greater than the first. It is a malicious Design of representing *Every* body to be *Wicked*, that *He* may appear *Innocent*. The Persons that reason thus, sometimes pretend to have an high Regard for the Liberties

SERM. berties and Just Freedoms of Human  
 IV. Nature in *Civil* Matters, and are mighty  
 uneasy, and impatient under any Restraining of them. If they are such *Friends* to Freedom, in God's Name, let them assert it there, where it will be of most Importance to them, in the Cause of Virtue and Religion. Let them remember themselves to be, not only freeborn *Englishmen*, but freeborn *Christians*: let them be Jealous of their *Spiritual* Liberty, as well as their *Temporal*; and not tie their own Hands, and deliver themselves up (as it were) bound and fettered to the Imperious Sway of their Lusts and Passions. This is to make Man a Slave, and God a Tyrant; and is by no means of a Piece with their Scheme, nor becoming those who plead for the Rights and Liberties of Human Nature.

Wherefore, laying aside these Shifts and Excuses, let us *All* set ourselves in good earnest to resist all manner of Temptations: let us put out all the Strength which we naturally *have* to this Purpose, and beg of God Supernatural-ly



ly to supply us with what we *have not*. SERM.

Especially at this Solemn Time, set a-

IV.

part to Commemorate the great Conflict of our Saviour with the Tempter in the Wilderness, and to prepare and qualify Us for such Spiritual Encounters. Let us look up to the Example of *Christ*, and remember how Victorious he was over those fierce Assaults of *Satan*; and what Assurance he hath given us, that They who tread in his Steps, and resolutely fight the good Fight, shall be like Victorious. And whilst we resist, as he did, let us be sure to use the same Means of Resistance, that he used, *Fasting and Prayer*: For there is *no Kind* of Temptation, but may, by the Joint Force of *These*, be *cast out*.

To These therefore let us fly, These let us lay hold of, bending our Knees often in private, During this Season of Devotion, and applying ourselves to the Throne of Grace, in those Excellent Words of the Church, which comprehend in short whatever hath in this Discourse been more largely delivered.



SERM. O God, who knowest us to be set in the  
 IV. midst of so many and great Dangers, that  
 by reason of the Frailty of our Natures we  
 cannot stand upright; Grant to us such  
 Strength and Protection, as may support  
 us in all Dangers, and carry us through  
 all Temptations, through Jesus Christ our  
 Lord. To whom, &c.

And these are the Arguments of Satan, and  
 that Satan will be hath given us, that  
 they who were in the Spirit, and were  
 might fight the good Fight, that they  
 like Victorious. And whilst we rest,  
 he did, for he is sure to win the same  
 means of Resistance, that he used, for  
 of and Prayer: For there is no kind of  
 Temptation, but may, by the Joint  
 Force of these, be cast out.  
 To these therefore let us fly. These  
 let us hold of, bending our knees of-  
 ten in private. During this Season of De-  
 votion, and applying ourselves to the  
 Throne of Grace, in those excellent  
 words of the Church, which compe-  
 hend in short whatever hath in this Dis-  
 course been more largely delivered.

THE

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THE  
Horrid Imprecation  
OF THE  
*J E W S*,  
AND THE  
Justice and Wisdom  
OF  
G O D  
In fulfilling it upon them.

---

THE  
OF THE  
J E W S  
AND THE  
Justice and Wisdom  
OF  
G O D  
in fulfilling it upon them.

---

*The Horrid Imprecation of the Jews, and  
the Justice and Wisdom of God in ful-  
filling it upon them, displayed:*

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I N A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

St. James's Chappel,

On Good-Friday, 1715.

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MATTH. xxvii. 25.

*Then answered all the People, and said;  
His Blood be on Us, and on our Children!*

THE History of the Jewish Nation SERM.  
is the History of Divine Provi- v.  
dence, from whence, if we peruse it with  
Attention, and Diligence, we may  
learn what are the usual Methods of



SERM. God's dealing with a People, of his  
 V. raising, or depressing, his rewarding, or  
 ~~~~~ punishing them, in proportion to their  
 Moral and Religious Deserts, or Deme-
 rits. And there is no Branch of that
 History, which will furnish us with
 clearer Instructions of this kind, than
 the Account of what befell the *Jews* up-
 on their Crucifying the Lord of Life,
 and fastening the guilt of that flagitious
 Act upon Themselves and their Poste-
 rity; when *all the People answered and*
said, His Blood be on Us, and on our
Children!

The Reflections which I intend to
 make on these Words, shall be offered to
 your Thoughts in this Order.

I. I will consider their Connexion
 with the preceding Circumstances
 of the Evangelist's Account; by
 which it will appear, with what
 Solemnity and Deliberation, and
 how inveterate a Malice and Obsti-
 nacy they were uttered.

II. I will

II. I will shew, in how wonderful a

III.

Manner this Imprecation was fulfilled on the *Jews*, and is still to this day fulfilling upon them.

III. I will suggest some Reflections tending to vindicate the Justice and Wisdom of God, in dealing thus severely with this People; his *Justice*, in respect of the Sufferers themselves; his *Wisdom*, with regard to the great Ends and Designs he proposed to himself in their Sufferings. From which I shall, in the

Last place, deduce some Useful and Concerning Inferences.

As to the First of these, we may observe, that the Imprecation of the Text was an Act, not of sudden Rage, but of deliberate and unrelenting Malice. They who uttered it, were no Strangers to the Person and Character of *Christ*;

I.

S E R M. had been Eye-witnesses of his spotless
 V Life and Conversation; had often heard
 the Heavenly Doctrine he preached, and
 seen the matchless Wonders he performed, to confirm the Truth of it; knew the
 Types and Prophecies, that pointed him
 out as the *Messiah*, and were, at that
 very time, in full Expectation of their
 Accomplishment: And yet resisted all
 this Light and Conviction; and, because
 their Interest and Authority with the
 People declined by his Means, *took Coun-
 sel to slay him.*

The Chief Priests, the Scribes, and
 Elders, assembled in *Sanhedrim*, con-
 demned him over Night; slept upon
 their unrighteous Judgment, without
 Remorse; and, when the Morning was
 come, led him away to *Pilate* the Ro-
 man Governor, to whom the Power of
 Life and Death appertained. *Pilate*,
 upon Examination, publicly declared,
 that he found no Fault in him; and,
 when they insisted on his Execution,
 sent them to *Herod* the Tetrarch of *Ga-
 lilee*, within whose Territory some
 Part

Part of our Saviour's Life had been S E R M.
spent; but He also acquitted him. Glad V.

of Herod's concurring Judgment, Pilate 
addresses himself again to the Jews, ex-
postulates with them upon their ground-
less Prosecution of Jesus, and labours
to divert them from it. When they
continued still deaf to all his Intreaties,
he tried yet one Experiment more; gave
our Saviour up to the Soldiers to be
scourged, hoping, that Sight would mi-
tigate the Fury, and move the Compa-
sion of his Accusers; and then proposes
him as the Man he was by Custom to re-
lease at the Passover; and, that he might
be sure to determine their Choice to
Him, names *Barabbas*, a notorious Rob-
ber and Murderer, in Competition with
him. Even this Infamous Person is
thought a fitter Object of Mercy, than
Jesus: And now impatient of Delay,
and unsoftened by all these Applications,
they cry out, more vehemently than
ever, *Crucify him, crucify him. When he*
saw therefore that he could prevail nothing
(says the Evangelist) he took Water, and
washed

SERM. *washed his Hands before the Multitude,*
 V. *saying, I am innocent of the Blood of this*
 Just Person; *see Ye to it. Then answered*
All the People, and said, His Blood be
on us, and on our Children!

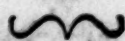
All the People! Not only those of mean and base Condition, who are usually the most forward in such Popular Clamours; but the Chief Priests, the Scribes, and Elders themselves, who then stood before the Tribunal of *Pilate*; not only the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, but the whole Nation of the *Jews*, who were then assembled to celebrate the Paschal Solemnity: *All the People*, in the utmost Force and Fulness of that Expression, *answered and said, His Blood be on Us, and on our Children!*

Never sure was any Sinful Wish expressed with so much Solemnity, Unanimity, and Warmth; or attended every way with such high and horrid Circumstances of Aggravation; and no wonder, therefore, if it received its Accomplishment after so remarkable a manner, as can, in no other Account of Men, or Times,

and the Justice of God, displayed.

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Times, be paralleled. Which is what I, SERM.
in the V.



Second place, proposed to consider and II.
explain.

Blood (i. e. Innocent Blood) defileth Numb.
the Land (saith their Law) and the Land XXXV. 33.
cannot be cleansed of the Blood that is
shed therein, but by the Blood of him that
shed it. This Rule held even of Com-
mon Blood, spilt by a private Hand;
and how then was the Land to be cleans-
ed of the Blood of the *Messiah*, the Son
of God, which that whole Nation
spilt, and made themselves answerable
for the Guilt of it? how, but by the
Blood of that whole Nation, by their
utter Ruin and Excision? which accord-
ingly happened soon afterwards, when
the Armies of *Vespasian* encompassed *Je-*
rusalem. The Calamities they under-
went in that Siege, were such as never
befell any other City or Nation; The
Account we have of them is astonishing,
and would have surpassed all Belief, had
it

SERM. it not been given us by One, who was
 v. himself an Eye-witness of them, and a
 ~ Sharer in them; and who tells us, that
 no less than eleven hundred Thousand
Jews fell at that time, either by Sword,
 or Famine.

It may be worth our while to observe
 from that Historian some Circumstances,
 which shew, how strict a Correspondence
 there was between their Crime
 and their Punishment; an Historian
 that had nothing less in his View, than
 to prove, that the One was adapted to the
 Other, and a just Consequence of it.

The Nation, collected in a Body to
 celebrate that Passover, had committed
 this crying Sin; and the Vengeance of
 God overtook them at another Paschal
 Season, when they were again thus embodied,
 when all the *Jews* were shut up
 in *Jerusalem*, as Beasts in a Slaughter-
 house, and none could escape the Sword
 of the *Romans*.

The Rejection of the true *Messiah* was
 their Crime, and their hearkening to
 many false *Messiah's* afterwards was the
 Source

Source of their Calamities; their frequent Revolts on that Account being the true Cause of the Resolution that was taken to extirpate and destroy them. S E R M.
V.

They pursued our Saviour to the Cross, that they might not be suspected of setting up a Rival Title to that of *Cæsar*; lest (said they) *the Romans come, and take away our Place and Nation.* Joh. xi. 48.

What they endeavoured to avoid by this Wickedness, befell them on the Account of it: The *Romans* came, and took away their Place and Nation so entirely, that after the second Attempt made upon them by *Titus*, they never had the least Shadow of Magistracy and Government amongst them, and after their final Destruction by *Adrian*, they were not allowed, so much as to live in *Jewry*, no not upon Terms of the lowest, and most abject Slavery.

Nor did the Vengeance of God stop here, but hath pursued and doth still pursue them into all the Corners of the Earth, whither they have been driven; in all which, their Circumstances are so singular,

SER M. singular, so unlike those of Other Ex-
 v. iles and Captives, and so different from
 ~~~~~ what befell them in their former Disper-  
 sions, that no Account can be given of  
 their thus Suffering beyond Example,  
 but from their Sinning beyond Example  
 in the Crucifixion of our Saviour.

To what else can we ascribe that Uni-  
 versal Contempt and Abhorrence they  
 have undergone from *Christians* of all  
 sorts, nay even from *Turks* and *Hea-*  
*thens*; so as to become, in the Prophetick  
 Expressions of *Moses*, an *Astonishment*,  
 Deut. a *Proverb*, and a *By-word* among all Na-  
 xxviii. 37. tions, *whither the Lord hath led them?*

To what else can be imputed their  
 Exclusion from Offices and Honours eve-  
 ry where, and even from the Common  
 Benefits of Strangers? The frequent  
 Oppressions and Exactions, under which  
 they have groaned, the various Expulsions,  
 and Massacres that have befallen them?  
 Wherever they came, *they have* (as the Pen  
 of the same Prophet describes their Case)  
 Deut. found no Ease, neither hath the Sole of  
 xxviii. 65. their Foot had Rest; but the Lord hath  
 given

*and the Justice of God displayed.*

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*given them a Trembling Heart, and Failing of Eyes, and Sorrow of Mind.*

SERM.

V.

In their other Deportations, they had often the Favour of their Conquerors; were permitted by them freely and publicly to exercise their Religion, and even to make Profelytes, to live under their own Laws and Customs, and to retain some Shadow of their Domestick Polity and Government. But in this Last, they have had none of these Privileges, or Encouragements; none secured to them by Law, but indulged only by a Secret, and Precarious Connivance; which has been limited and withdrawn, according to the Will and Pleasure of their Masters.

Finally, whereas the longest of their Captivities, after they settled in *Canaan*, lasted but seventy Years; *This* has endured for above Sixteen hundred; that is, for a greater Tract of Time than intervened; from the first building of their Temple by *Solomon*, to its final Destruction by *Titus*. Thus long have they been no Nation, but so many

SER M. many scattered Herds of Vagabonds,  
 V. without any Temple-worship, or Sacrifices (the chief Part of their Religion) and without any reasonable Hope, or Prospect of enjoying them. All the Attempts that have been made towards rebuilding their Holy Place, or even towards recovering their Country out of the Hands of Infidels, have been defeated, and blasted by God in so remarkable a manner, as if he were jealous of every Event, which might seem to open a Way home to this wretched People, and give them the least Glympe of a Deliverance from their Bondage.

And all this while (which is the most strange and singular Circumstance of their Punishment) they have continued unmixed, unincorporated with any of the Nations of the Earth, amidst whom they dwelt; their Preservation in which Separate State is more wonderful, than their Total Dispersion; and could not have happened for so long a time, so uniformly, every where, without the Immediate Interposition of God's Providence,



dence, to prevent a Coalition; in order S E R M.  
to render them, by that means, Standing V.  
and Illustrious Monuments of his Ven-  
geance, to all Nations and Ages. The  
Justice and Wisdom of which Severe Pro-  
ceeding, I shall now in the

*Third* place, briefly open to you : The III.  
*Justice* of God, in respect to the *Sufferers*  
themselves; and his *Wisdom*, with re-  
gard to the great *Ends* and *Designs* he  
proposed to himself in their Sufferings.

The *Justice* of God is manifest, in  
thus punishing *that* Race of Men, which  
*actually* spilt the Blood of *Christ*, and  
made themselves, by a dire *Imprecation*,  
responsible for it. And as to the Con-  
sequences of this Punishment on *their*  
*Children* and *Descendents*, it must be  
considered, that *they* reach only to those  
of their *Posterity*, who abet their Fore-  
fathers Crime, and continue in their In-  
fidelity; for to those of them, who ab-  
hor it; who acknowledge *Christ* to be  
the *Messiah*, entertain his Doctrine, and



SERM. throw themselves into the Arms of his  
 v. Mercy, an Exclusion from the *Earthly*  
 ~~~~~ *Canaan*, and its Privileges, can be  
 thought no grievous Punishment, when
 that Loss is so amply recompensed by
 Heb. xi. their gaining Admission to a *better*, an
 16. *Heavenly Country*, even a Citizenship of
 Ver. 10. that *new Jerusalem*, which is from above,
 and whose Builder is God.

And if the *Justice* of God be free from
 all Imputation in this great Event, his
Wisdom, I am sure, is highly illustrated
 by it. For the Destruction of the *Jew-*
ish Polity and Nation was so ordered by
 him, in all the Steps and Methods of its
 Accomplishment, as to confirm the
 Truth, and spread the Interests of *Chri-*
stianity.

Could there be a plainer, and more
 irrefragable Proof of the Divine Mis-
 sion of our Lord, than the fulfilling of
 this Curse on his Murtherers? Who,
 that saw their wide Dispersions, and sad
 Sufferings, could forbear arguing after
 this manner? No Nation, from the Be-
 ginning of the World, was ever punished

as this Nation; and therefore, if the SERM.
Punishment of Nations be for their Sins, V.
some Heinous Act must have been done 
by them, which never was done by any
other Nation: And what could that be,
but the Effusion of the Blood of *Jesus*?
That Blood therefore, the Guilt of which
pursues them, was the Blood of an In-
nocent Person, and not of an Impostor,
the Seal of the Doctrine which he pu-
blished, and the Evidence of his being
what he affirmed himself to be, the *Son*
of God.

Indeed this way of Reasoning was so
Obvious and Cogent, that many, even
among the *Jews* themselves, acknow-
ledged the Force of it. And as for those
who obstinately persisted in the Sin of
their Forefathers, after *Jerusalem* was
destroyed, even they themselves unwill-
ingly contributed to the Advancement
of Christianity.

The Dispersed *Jews* carried along
with them into all Quarters of the Earth,
the Oracles of God, those Ancient Pro-
phesies of their Nation, which described

SERM. the Person and Character of the *Messiah*,
 V.  foretold the Time of his Appearance, and the Circumstances of his Death and Sufferings. And these Prophecies, when duly attended to, were sufficient for the Conviction of any Men, who did not lie, as those *Jews* did, under a Judicial Infatuation and Blindness. They were the great Enemies of the Gospel, and yet the chief Promoters of it, by the Attestation which they gave to the Integrity of those Books, from whence the Proof of its Divine Original was most clearly derived. A Testimony of unsuspected Credit! since the *Jews* would not, if they could, have corrupted those Books, in favour of *Christians*; and could not have corrupted them, if they would, by reason of their manifold and wide Dispersions. During which, God, I have said, has kept them in a Separate State, not suffering them to incorporate with any other Nation, in order by this means to render the Triumphs of his Justice more conspicuous, and in order also to preserve them ready for that gracious

cious Call, which, we piously believe, S E R M.
shall one Day summon them from all V.
Parts of the Earth, and gather together 
the Outcasts of Israel.—That so *We* and
They may become *One Fold, under One*
Shepherd, Christ the Righteous! Rom. xi.
Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom ^{33.}
and Knowledge of God! How unsearch-
able are his Judgments, and his Ways past
finding out! However,

These we may humbly presume to
have been *some* of those *Many Wise Ends*,
to which Divine Providence directed
this Wonderful Dispensation. *Others*
might be added: But I forbear;— and
shall choose rather to spend the remain-
ing Part of my Time, in deducing (as
I proposed) from the Whole some Useful
and Concerning *Inferences*.

1. *His Blood be on Us, and on our Chil-*
dren! and it happened to them, even
according to their Wishes. Let us learn
from hence, to abstain from all such
rash and horrid Imprecations, which the
Ears of sober Heathens would tingle
at; but which are more unbecoming,

SERMON. and more heinous (as, I fear, they are
 v. more familiar) in the Mouths of *Christians*. For the Vengeance of God will
 find us out, not only for the Evil Deeds we commit, but for the profane Folly (so frequent among us) of wishing that Damnation to ourselves, which we otherwise but too well deserve. They, who thus add to the Guilt of their Sins the binding Power of a Curse, are doubly unpardonable; they consent to their Punishment, as they before consented to their Crime; and *their Damnation* therefore is every way *just*.

Mat. xii.
 36.

Every Idle Word, that we speak, we shall give an Account thereof at the Day of Judgment, says our Saviour. How much more shall we be accountable for those (not idle, empty Forms of Speech, but) solemn and significant Imprecations, by which we anticipate our Judgment, and give Sentence against ourselves. Let such an Iniquity be far from all those that name the Name of *Christ*! To whom Simplicity of Speech is as strictly enjoined,

enjoined, as even Sincerity of Heart, **SERM.**
or Integrity of Manners. **V.**

2. The Completion of this Curse, and the Vengeance taken on that whole Nation, in consequence of it, will lead us to admire the inscrutable Methods of God's Providence, in bringing about the Salvation of Sinners. By the Scandal of the Cross, and the several mean Circumstances of our Saviour's Humiliation, the Wise, the Noble, and the Mighty Men of the Earth, were kept back from embracing the Faith of *Christ*. But that Prejudice against Christianity soon turned to its Advantage; when they saw his Murderers punished in so remarkable, and astonishing a manner; then they began to discern the surpassing *Dignity* of the Person suffering, and the Infinite *Merit* of his Sufferings; to discover some of the *Reasons*, to admire the *Wisdom*, and lay hold of the *Benefits* of that humble and mysterious Dispensation, *God manifest in the Flesh*, dying on the Cross, *to destroy the Works of the Devil*.

SERM.

v.

Eph. iii.
18.

A Subject always highly deserving, but on this Day more particularly challenging our devout Reflections; which it will to the utmost both exercise and improve. A Subject full of Wonders, not to be exhausted! Inasmuch as it contains the *Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height* (even the whole Extent and Compass) of the Love of God towards Mankind in Christ Jesus.

It is good for us to be here, to dwell on the Contemplation of this delightful, this amazing Mystery; which even Angels desire to look into, but cannot fully comprehend.

Phil. iii.
8.1 Cor. i.
23.

Let us determine, with St. Paul, to count every thing but *Dross and Dung*, in comparison of the Excellency of this Knowledge of Christ crucified; to the Jews, indeed, a *Stumbling Block*, and to the Greeks Foolishness; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and Christ the Wisdom of God.

3. It may be a third Improvement of what has been discoursed, if we take Occasion

Occasion from thence, to account for the S E R M.
Infidelity of those Men, who live where V.
the Gospel of *Christ* is professed, and 
yet shut their Eyes against the Light of
it. Can we wonder, this should happen
now and then to *particular* Persons,
when it is the Case of so great a *Body* of
Men, as the *Jews*; such a Nation of
hardened Infidels, who though they
have smarted under the Rod of God,
during Sixteen Ages, for spilling the
Blood, and rejecting the Doctrine of
Christ, continue still insensible, both of
the Guilt of the One, and the Evidence
of the Other? When such an Effect
happens, we must not impute it to any
Sett of Natural, or Moral Causes; the
Hand of God is in it, and some Degree
of a Judicial Induration. Could we
look to the Bottom of such Mens Un-
belief, we should find, that it is gene-
rally owing to some high and flagrant
Act of Wickedness, which provoked
God to withdraw his Grace from them,
after they had long resisted the Power of
it, and leave them to walk in the Ways
of

SER. M. of their own Heart, and in the Sight of
 v. their own Eyes, without Check or
 ~~~~~ Controul. And in such a Case, though  
 they may be Men of great Acuteness  
 and Sagacity, in discerning and pursuing  
 the Advantages of this Life, as the  
*Jews* themselves are; yet, in respect of  
 Divine Truth, they may be altogether

2 Cor. iv. inapprehensive and stupid. *If the Go-*  
 4. *spel be hid, it is hid to them which are lost,*  
*in whom the God of this World hath blind-*  
*ed the Minds of them which believe not,*  
*lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of*  
*Christ, who is the Image of God, should*  
*shine unto them.*

4. The Reflections which have been  
 advanced, do also (in the fourth Place)  
 suggest to us Matter of holy Caution  
 and Fear. If the most beloved Nation  
 on Earth, and chosen People of God;  
 Rom. ix. They, to whom pertained the Adoption,  
 4. and the Law, and the Covenants of God,  
 and the Promises; if They could sin a-  
 way all these Privileges, and utterly for-  
 feit the Divine Protection and Favour,  
 What Security have We, that, abusing  
 and

and despising the same Mercies, we shall S E R M.  
not smart under the same Judgments? V.  
that the Kingdom of God, of which we   
are unworthy, shall not be taken away Mat. xxi.  
from us, and given to a Nation bringing 43.  
forth the Truths thereof? The Inference  
is S. Paul's;— Well! (says he) because Rom. xi.  
of Unbelief, they were broken off; and 20, 21.  
Thou standest by Faith: Be not high-mind-  
ed, but fear. For if God spared not the  
Natural Branches, take heed lest he also  
spare not Thee.

In order therefore, to avoid their Fate,  
let us avoid any Resemblance of their  
Guilt, and keep ourselves at as great a  
Distance as we can from that Sin of the  
Jews, which drew these Calamities up-  
on them, and in which even We, who  
live so long after it was committed,  
may yet be to some Degree involved;  
if we are professed Enemies of Goodness,  
if we slander Christ's Word, blaspheme  
his Person, and despise his Messengers;  
if we privately bring in Dangerous He-  
resies, destructive of Christian Faith and  
Christian Practice; for of such Persons

S. Peter

SERM. St. Peter and St. Paul have pronounced,  
 V. that *they deny the Lord who bought them,*  
 2 Pet. ii. *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh,*  
 1. *and put him to an open Shame.*  
 Heb. vi. 6.

In order to stand clear of this Imputation, let it not be thought enough by us, that we *do not* run into any of these Excesses ourselves, while we abet, or connive at those *who do*: But let us set ourselves, in our several Places and Stations, to discountenance Infidelity, and to rebuke that Spirit of Profaneness, which hath for many Years past appeared open and barefaced with Impunity (I had almost said, with Applause) amongst us, to the great Offence of sober Minds, to the Prejudice of all good Order and Government, the Disgrace of our Religion, and the Peril of Souls! It is high Time that these daring Attempts against the Honour of *Christ* and his Gospel should be effectually checked and suppressed, that the Civil Magistrate's Authority should be employed, and the Spiritual Sword of Excommunication unsheathed against such Impious Offenders.

*He*



*and the Justice of God, displayed.* 141

*He that despised Moses's Law, died* SERM.  
*without Mercy (I speak the Words of* v.  
*the Apostle to the Hebrews, and which* Heb. x.  
*are applied by him to this very purpose)* 28, 29.

*Of how much sorer Punishment, suppose  
ye, shall They be thought worthy, who  
have trodden under Foot the Son of God,  
and have counted the Blood of the Cove-  
nant, wherewith they were sanctified, an  
unholy thing?*

May the all-sufficient Merit of that Blood  
though undervalued by them, be yet ex-  
tended to them; purge their Consciences  
from Dead Works, and enlighten their  
Minds with saving Knowledge! And if  
they will not repent, but resolve still to  
go on in their Impieties, let us be sure  
to have no Fellowship with them, but de- Num. xvi.  
part from the Tents of these wicked Men, 26.  
*lest we be consumed in their Sins!*

T H E





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S E R M O N

THE  
CHRISTIAN State,  
A State of  
SUFFERING.

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THE  
CHRISTIAN  
A STATE OF  
SUFFERING

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*The Christian State, a State of Suffering.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

*Westminster-Abbey,*

Nov. 1. 1717.

Being *All-Saints Day.*

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1 PET. ii. 21.

*Even hereunto were ye called; because  
Christ also suffered for us, leaving us  
an Example, that ye should follow his  
Steps.*

THE Duty, and the Perfection of SERM.  
a Christian consists in the Imita- VI.  
tion of *Christ*; in the Imitation of every  
Part of the Spotless Example, of the  
VOL. III. L Passive



S E R M. Passive as well as Active Graces, in  
 VI. which he abounded. Both Sides of his  
 Character are highly useful and instructive to us; Both, at different Times, and for different Ends, alike necessary to be attentively considered, and closely followed by us. But *some* Occasions, *some* Times there are, when that Part of *Christ's* Example, which relates to the sad Sufferings he underwent, and the Heroick Manner in which he bore them, is principally to be regarded by *Christians*. *Such* was the Season, at which St. *Peter* wrote this Epistle to his Brethren of the Dispersion, then every where oppressed, afflicted, persecuted: And *such* is this particular Day in the *Calendar* of our Church; sacred to the Memory of those Saints, Confessors, and Martyrs of old, who being exercised in Afflictions, and trained up to Sufferings, *fought the good Fight, and finished their Course*, and obtained the Crown, which was laid up for them by the Author and Finisher of their Faith, the great Pattern and Rewarder of their Sufferings, *Christ Jesus!*  
 Even

2 Tim. iv.  
 7.

*Even hereunto they were called, and in* SER M.  
*this their Saintship chiefly consisted; the* VI.  
*Imitation of Him who suffered for Us,*  
*leaving Us an Example, that We should*  
*follow his Steps.*

The chief Design of St. Peter, throughout this Epistle, is, to fortify the new Converts against those Disgraces and Afflictions, which had befallen, or were ready to befall them, on the Account of their Religion; and the Argument, by which he persuades them here in the Text to Equanimity and Patience, is, we see, that *even hereunto they were called*; that they felt no more now, than what, from their very Entrance on Christianity, they had Reason to expect; that these were the Terms, on which they embraced the Faith; that such Sufferings are the proper Lot and Portion of *Christians*; because (as he adds) *Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example that ye should follow his Steps.* If the Cap- Heb. ii.  
*tain of our Salvation was made perfect* 10.  
*through Sufferings, how should any Man*  
*who marches under his Ensigns, ever*  

L 2                      hope

S E R M. hope to exempt himself from them? He  
 VI. not only gave us Precepts, which we  
 are to obey, but a Pattern also to direct,  
 and facilitate our Obedience. They  
 1 Joh. ii. therefore, *who say, they abide in him,*  
 6. *ought themselves also to walk, even as he*  
*walked;* and consequently (if the Will of  
 God so be) to Suffer, as He Suffered,  
 with a becoming Meekness and Patience,  
 with Fortitude and Firmness: Especially  
 if it be considered, that He *Suffered for*  
*Us*, i. e. on our Account, and for our  
 Advantage: And why then should we  
 think it hard and unreasonable to Suffer  
 for ourselves? or be froward and uneasy  
 under any Affliction of Life that befalls  
 us? He took out the Sting, and Expi-  
 ated the Guilt of our Sins by his Suf-  
 ferings; but so as to leave us still under  
 an Arrear of Punishment, which We  
 ourselves are to discharge, and, by that  
 means (as St. Paul emphatically speaks)  
 Col. i. 24. *to fill up what is behind of the Afflictions*  
*of Christ in our Flesh. Even hereunto*  
*were We called; because Christ also suffer-*  
*ed*

*ed for us, leaving us an Example, that We should follow his Steps.* SERM. VI.

The Words, you see, will give me a proper Oçcasion of explaining two great Truths, alwas fit to be inculcated to *Christians*, and always present to the Minds, and exemplified in the Actions of those Holy Men and Women, whom we this Day profess to Commemorate.

The two Points are these:

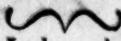
*First*, That the *Christian* State, however willing some *Christians* may be to mistake the Nature of it, is certainly a *State of Suffering*. I.

*Secondly*, That the Sufferings of *Christ* afford us a plain *Argument*, why *We* also should expect our Share of Sufferings; and withal a powerful *Motive* to support us under them. And II.

*First*, I am to shew, that the *Christian* State is a State of Suffering. I.



SERM. *This is an hard Saying*, which will not easily gain Admittance with the Great, the Rich, and the Prosperous; with those who *are Clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and fare Sumptuously every Day*. And yet, as unwelcome as the Doctrine may be, it is very clear and certain. We can scarce open a Page of the Gospel, without finding it either laid down in the Express Words of *Christ* and his Apostles, or recommended by their Practice. *Even hereunto are we called*, says St. Peter in the Text; *We are thereunto appointed*, *Εἰς τὸ τοῦτο κείμεθα*, says S. Paul, where he is professedly treating of this Subject. And in another Place, *All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution*. And again, *We must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*.

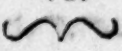
VI.  
  
 Luke xvi.  
 19.

1 Thes.  
 ii. 3.

2 Tim. iii.  
 12.

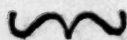
Acts xiv.  
 22.

'Tis true, these, and many other Passages of like Import in the *New Testament*, are chiefly, and in their utmost Extent, to be understood of the Times when they were first uttered, the Infant Age of Christianity; when the Standard  
 of

of the Cross being set up, all they, who re- S E R M.  
 paired to it, were engaged in a continual VI.  
 Opposition to the Powers of this World;   
 and Persecutions; Afflictions, Distresses  
 attended them in every Step of their Con-  
 flict; when the Sufferings of *Christians*  
 were designed to promote the Reception  
 of the Faith of *Christ*, and the Seed of  
 the Word sown was to be watered, and  
 made fruitful by the Blood of Martyrs.  
 Then indeed was it most remarkably,  
 most eminently true, that the *Christian*  
*State* and Profession was a State of Suf-  
 fering. However, though this be not at  
 present the General Lot of *Christians*,  
 although the Instances be now rare, in  
 which we are thus called upon to wit- 1 Tim. vi.  
 ness a good Confession, and to resist even 13.  
 to Blood; yet still, I say, there is a Sense Heb. xii.  
 of the Assertion in which it holds good, 4.  
 and will hold good to the End of the  
 World; still the Doctrine of the Gospel  
 is *Λόγος σωτηρίας*, the Doctrine of the Cross,  
 and He, who would be a true Disciple of  
*Christ*, must even now deny himself,  
 and take up his Cross, and follow him.

SERM.

VI.



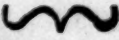
Can we doubt of this Truth, if we consider the Solemn Engagements, into which we entered, when we were first listed in his Service at our Baptism, That we would *manfully fight under his Banner, against Sin, the World and the Devil, and continue Christ's faithful Soldiers and Servants to our Lives End?* Are these Enemies so weak, and contemptible, as that we should hope to resist them with Ease? Can this Combat be maintained, this Warfare be accomplished by us, without great Difficulties and Troubles?

The good *Christian* is not of this World, even while he lives *in it*; and therefore the Men of this World, whose Life is not like his, whose Ways are of another Fashion, will be sure to malign, and traduce, and perhaps despise him.

1 Pet. iv.

4.

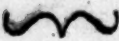
*Because he runs not with them to the same Excess of Riot,* they will charge him with Affectation and Singularity at least, if not with downright Hypocrisy; they will *daily mistake his Sayings,* misconstrue all his best Actions, misrepresent his  
brightest

brightest Virtues: His Humility and SERM.  
Lowliness of Mind, shall be called VI.  
Meanness of Spirit; his Patience under   
Injuries and Affronts, Insensibility and  
Folly; his Exactness in the Performance  
of Religious Duties, his Conscientious  
Abstinence from whatever has the Ap-  
pearance of Evil, his holy Severities  
and Mortifications shall furnish ample  
Matter for their ungodly Disdain: *The* Psa. cxix.  
*Proud will have him exceedingly in De-* 51.  
*rision; he will be as a Tabret unto them; Job. xvii.*  
*a By-word of the People, and the Song of* 6.  
*the Drunkards.* Psal. lxxix.  
12.

And can a Man so treated and vilified,  
be said to be in an unsuffering State? I  
am sure, these are reckoned among the  
bitter Ingredients of our Saviour's Suf-  
ferings; so that even where he is said to  
have *endured the Cross, and despised the*  
*Shame*, it is added also, in the next  
Verse, that he *endured the Contradiction*  
*of Sinners*—As if that Circumstance add-  
ed some Degree of Weight and Sharp-  
ness to his Other Afflictions.

The



S E R M. The Sincere Christian cannot deny or  
 VI.  dissemble the Truth, when a proper  
 Occasion bids him stand forth and own  
 it; he cannot flatter *Wickedness in high  
 Places*, fall in with false and prevailing  
 Opinions, or *follow a Multitude to do  
 Evil*; and He, who cannot bend himself  
 to a Compliance in such Cases, must  
 expect, not to continue unmolested, but  
 to reap the proper Fruits of his Stub-  
 bornness. Or should the Course of this  
 World, in which he lives, run smoothly  
 on; should he be ruffled and discompos-  
 ed by no Enemies, no Accidents from  
 without, yet still there are Inward An-  
 xieties and Sorrows, Perplexities and  
 Troubles, that attend him.

*He finds* (for St. Paul himself owns that  
 Rom. vii. he found) *a Law in his Members war-*  
 23. *ring against the Law of his Mind, and*  
*bringing him, or endeavouring to bring*  
*him, into Captivity to the Law of Sin.*  
 He has unruly Appetites to mortify,  
 strong Passions to tame; and the Strug-  
 gle with these, even after they seem  
 vanquished, must sometimes be renew-  
 ed,

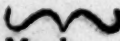
ed, and such a Struggle is no ways S E R M.  
*Joyous, but Grievous.* The Fear he has VI.  
of offending, keeps him under a perpet-  
tual Alarm; the Sense he has of Guilt  
is quick and pungent, and subjects him,  
whenever he falls, to great Remorse and  
Uneasiness. What Sighs, what Groans,  
what Floods of Tears does it occasion?  
What Rigour, what Revenges on him-  
self does it produce? How doth *his own* Jer. ii. 19.  
*Wickedness* (nay, how doth his very Er-  
rors and Infirmities) *correct him, and his*  
*Backslidings reprove him?*

Or *could* we suppose him to have no  
Occasion thus to suffer for his *Own* Sins,  
yet will he never want *one* of suffering  
for the Sins of *Others*. The good *Chri-*  
*stian* cannot be an unconcerned Specta-  
tor of any great Degree of Wicked-  
ness, even while he himself stands free  
from the Infection of it. His tender  
Regard for God's Honour, for the Inter-  
ests of Piety, and the Good of Souls,  
makes him lay to heart the crying Ini-  
quities of that People, amidst whom he  
dwells, and grieve for those, who do  
not

S E R M. not (and the rather, because they do  
 VI. not) grieve for themselves. When he  
 observes the Scandalous Progress of Infidelity, the open Growth of Profaneness; the Emulation and Strife, the Oppression and Injustice, the Hatred and Cruelty, that abound in the World through Lust; in a word, when he sees the most immoral Practices and Pollutions of the Heathens reigning among those *who name the Name of Christ*, though in their *Works they deny him*; such a Scene of Sin and Misery wounds him to the Quick, and fills his Soul with unspeakable Sorrow. *Rivers of Waters run down his Eyes, because Men keep not God's Law.*

Psa. cxix.  
 136.

'Tis true, his Mind is not always employed in this melancholy manner; he has also the Inward Joys and Consolations, arising from the Testimony of a good Conscience, from the Assurances of God's Favour, and the Refreshing Influences of his good Spirit; but even *These*, either for the Punishment of his Misuse of them, or for a Tryal of his Faith,

Faith, are sometimes withdrawn; and S E R M.  
 then his Soul is sorrowful even unto VI.  
 Death, Fearfulness and Trembling come   
 upon him, and his Heart within him is e- Matth.  
 ven like melted Wax. And this State of xviii. 38.  
 Dereliction is what the most Experienc- Psal. lv.  
 ed Saints and Servants of God have 5.  
 felt, and complained of: And no won- Psal. xxii.  
 der; since something not unlike it hap- 14.  
 pened even to the Son of God himself.

Add to this, that even the Best of Men,  
 and those who are advanced nearest to-  
 ward Perfection, have often some pecu-  
 liar Infirmary of Body or Mind, which  
 sticks close to them, gives them great  
 Interruptions in the Course of their Du-  
 ty, and great Trouble and Uneasiness  
 in the Performance of it; and this is  
 permitted by God, in order to keep  
 them Vigilant, Humble, Dependent;  
 even to S. Paul there was given a Thorn 2 Cor.  
 in the Flesh, a Messenger of Satan to buf- xii. 7.  
 fet him.

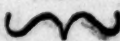
The Christian State then (even setting  
 aside the Extraordinary Case of Persecu-  
 tion for the Name of Christ) is certain-  
 ly



SERM. *ly a State of Suffering; Hereunto are we*

VI. *called,* as many of us as have vowed Obedience to *Christ*, and profess to believe, and to live, as he hath taught us, And if so, let us all lay our Hands upon our Hearts, and examine ourselves, whether, and how far we may be said to be in such a State, to have fulfilled the Duties, and undergone the Hardships, which entitle us to the Privileges of it.

Have we then lived according to the Flesh, or according to the Spirit? Have we exercised ourselves in the severe and rugged Parts of our Duty? or have we chosen for our Lot, the Gratifications of Sense, and vain Pleasures which did not profit us? Have we called ourselves often to account for our Miscarriages, and made a serious, a strict, and impartial Scrutiny into our past Lives and Actions? Have we felt the Spirit of Compunction and Contrition moving in our Hearts, and condemning us for our Transgressions? Have we deplored them? Have we prayed, and striven against

gainst them, and applied those harsh, S E R M.  
but wholesome Remedies, which the VI.  
Christian Religion prescribes for the   
Cure of such Diseases; Fasting, and  
Self-denial, and Mortification? Have  
we experienced the afflicting Hand of  
God, laying hold of us, when we  
transgressed, and gently leading us back  
into the Paths of Virtue, from whence  
we had swerved, by seasonable and mer-  
ciful Chastisements? If this be our Case,  
we have some Reason to hope, that we  
are in such a State and Condition of  
Mind, as becomes a good *Christian*,  
such as God will accept, and improve,  
and reward.

But now, on the other side, what if  
the Vanities of Life, and the Enjoy-  
ments of Sense have engrossed all our  
Thoughts and Affections? What, if we  
have been so far from *crucifying* our  
Lusts, that we have *indulged* them to the  
utmost? from *mourning* for our Sins,  
that we have even *boasted* of them?  
from humbling ourselves in private, by  
*voluntary* Austerities, that we have not  
regarded,

SERM. regarded, as we ought to do, even the  
 VI. *stated* Times of Publick and Solemn  
 ~~~~~ Humiliations? What if our *Diversions*  
 have been pursued in prejudice to our
Devotions? have taken up the *Room*,
 and eaten out the *Life* of them? Can
 such Inclinations, such Practices be re-
 conciled to the Spirit of the Gospel? Is
 this the Work, the Employment, *where-*
unto we are called? Is this Temper of
 Mind agreeable to the Character of a
 Serious and Sincere *Christian*?

Believe it, a Life of uninterrupted Jol-
 lity and Mirth, of perpetual Pleasure
 and Amusement, is not, cannot be the
 Life of a true Disciple of *Christ*. These
 things we may taste, but we are not to
 rest in them; they are our Refreshments
 on the way, not the End and Design of
 our Journey. He that pretends to be
 a *Christian indeed* (as St. Paul speaks of
 a *Widow indeed*) and liveth in Pleasure,
 is dead while he liveth; he savoureth not
 the things that be of God, hath no Relish
 of the Chief Duties and Offices of the
 Christian Life; and though he may put

1 Tim. v.
 6.
 Matt. xvi.
 23.

on

on some of the Outward *Forms* and Ap-
pearances of Godliness, is a Stranger to
the Inward Life and *Power* of it. *That*
is only to be attained by his fixing his
Eye on the Example, and following the
Steps of a Suffering, Crucified Saviour.
And therefore, I shall, as I proposed in
the next place,

SERM.
VI.
~~~~~

*Secondly*, Consider how the Sufferings  
of *Christ* afford us a *plain Argument*,  
why *We* also should expect *Our Share*  
of Sufferings, and withal, a *powerful*  
*Motive* to support us under them. And  
it is well they afford us *both* these; for  
the *one*, without the *other*, would be an  
Uncomfortable Consideration.

II.

The Apostle, we see, proposes the  
Example of *Christ* on the *Suffering Side*  
of it; as if *that* were the *Chief View*  
we were to take of it, *that* the great  
End and Design of his being made an  
Example to us. The most difficult Part  
of our Duty is to suffer well; and there-

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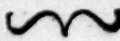


SERM. fore we stood *most* in need of a Perfect

VI. Pattern in *this* respect, to direct and encourage us; and what we wanted *most*, *Christ*, who came to make good all our Defects, and to heal all our Infirmities, took *most* Care to supply us with: and therefore from his Birth throughout his Life, to his Death, this is the Character, under which he appears to us. His Sufferings indeed were finished on the Cross; but they began, when he first entered on his State of Humiliation; when emptying himself of all his Glory, *he took upon him to deliver Man*, and, in order to it, *did not abhor the Virgin's Womb*.

Under this View if we consider him, and withal consider, that 'tis our Duty, and our Happiness to resemble him; what Hopes can we have to escape the Sufferings of this Life? Nay what Reason totally to decline them? How can we possibly, *without Suffering*, be like Him, who himself *did nothing but suffer*?

The Infinite Dignity of his Person (for he was the Son of God, and God the Son) hindered him not from taking

ing our Nature upon him, with all its SERM.  
meanest Circumstances, and with all its VI.  
most afflicting Accidents: and who is   
there then among the Sons of Men, so  
distinguished from the rest by his Great-  
ness, or Preeminence, as that it should  
misbecome him to learn this great Les-  
son of Humility? who, that should be  
ashamed to practise it?

He was of unblemished Purity, of  
perfect Sanctity and Innocence; and  
therefore the Calamities he underwent,  
were no ways necessary, either for the  
Tryal or Improvement of his Virtue; and  
yet he chose to undergo them. How then  
should the very Best of us (who ought,  
God knows, to be much Better, and yet,  
without such Tryals, are in danger of  
growing much Worse, than we are) ex-  
pect or even desire to be free from them?

Certainly we judge not aright of our  
Spiritual Wants and Necessities, of our  
Carnal Infirmities and Failures, if we  
wish to live always in perfect Ease, and  
think it a Mark of God's Favour, when  
nothing happens to deject, or disturb us.

SERM. Nay, but *then* is the Time, when we  
VI. have *most* Reason to suspect our selves.

There is a *Wo*, we know, denounced on  
Luke vi. *Christians, when all Men shall speak well*  
26. *of them; for so did they not of Christ*  
Rom. viii. *himself; and we are predestinate to be*  
29. *conformed to his Image; and therefore, as*  
far as we deviate from that Original, so  
far we fall short of Perfection and Happi-  
ness. *If we endure Chastning, God deal-*  
Heb. xii. *eth with us as Sons; even as he dealt*  
7. *with him, of whom he said: This is my*  
Mat. iii. *beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*  
17.

*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered*  
1 Pet. iv. *for us in the Flesh, let us arm ourselves*  
1. *with the same Mind; with a Resolution*  
*to imitate him in his perfect Submission*  
*and Resignation of himself to the Di-*  
*vine Will and Pleasure; in his Contempt*  
*of all the Enjoyments of Sense, of all*  
*the Vanities of this World, its Allure-*  
*ments and Terrors; in his Practice of*  
*Religious Severities; in his Love of Re-*  
*ligious Retirement; in his making it his*  
*Meat and his Drink, his only Study and*  
Joh. ix. 4. *Delight, to work the Work of him that*  
*sent*

sent him; in his choosing, for that End S E R M.  
 (when that End could not otherwise be VJ.  
 attained) Want before Abundance, Shame  
 before Honour, Pain before Pleasure,  
 Death before Life; and in his prefer-  
 ring *always* a laborious uninterrupted  
 Practice of Virtue, to a Life of Rest,  
 and Ease, and Indolence. *Let the same*  
*Mind, in all these respects, be in us,*  
*which was in Christ Jesus, who suffered*  
*for us, leaving us an Example, that we*  
*should follow his Steps.* The Task in-  
 deed is hard to Flesh and Blood, the  
 Difficulties that lie in our Way, are ex-  
 ceeding great, and would be altogether  
 insuperable, had not He, who set us an  
 Example, so far above the Level and  
 Pitch of human Nature, enabled, as well  
 as commanded us to follow it.

But, Thanks be to God, *That* is not  
 our Case. *Christ*, by the Merit of those *ve-*  
*ry Sufferings*, which he proposes to our  
 Imitation, has purchased for us all such  
 Extraordinary Aids and Assistances, as  
 are requisite to support us under them.  
 By what he underwent for our Sakes



S E R M. in his Life, and at his Death, he obtain-

VI. ed of God, not only a Release from the

~~~~~ Punishment of our Sins, but new Powers to qualify us for a further Increase in Virtue; not only the Pardoning, but Sanctifying Grace of his Spirit; by the

Gal. v. 24. Means of which we can now *crucify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts*; mortify and subdue all our irregular Passions, undervalue Pleasures, rejoyce in Afflictions, and *walk even as he walked*, in Humility and Patience, in Purity and Holiness. Weak and Impotent we

2 Cor. xii. are, but *his Grace is sufficient for us*:

9. We can do nothing of ourselves, but
Phil. iv. 13. *We can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us*; and, in Confidence of this Assistance, we may venture to take

Rom. viii. 35. to ourselves the Words of his fervent Apostle, and say, *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?* Who, or what shall hinder us from obeying his Precepts, and from transcribing his Practice? *Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword?* Nay, but in all these things

we are more than Conquerors, through S E R M.
Christ that loved us. VI.

If I am lifted up from the Earth (said John. xii.
he, speaking of the powerful Efficacy of 32.

his Cross and Sufferings) I will draw all
Men after me: I will lift Them also up
above their earthly Affections and Pursuits,
and raise them into the Participation of a
Divine and Heavenly Nature.— Look
down then upon us from thy Cross, Blef-
sed Jesu! Draw us, and we will run after Cant. i. 4.
thee, not only with willing, but Chear-
ful Minds; with Alacrity, and with Plea-
sure. We will trace all thy Steps from
Bethlehem to Calvary; we will imitate
thee, to the best of our Power, in all the
Stages and Conditions of thy Life, in what
thou didst, and in what thou sufferedst;
we will set thee before us in every Case,
and say, Would my Saviour have thus, or
thus behaved himself in these Circumstan-
ces? Would; he have yielded to such a
Temptation? or declined such a Conflict?
Would he have resented such an Injury;
or felt the least Discomposure of Mind,
upon such an Affront? Would he have

SERM. been elated upon such a Success; have
 VI. sunk under such a Pressure; or consulted
 with Flesh and Blood on such an Oc-
 casion? Why then should I, who have
 his Example to guide, his Promise of an
 exceeding Reward to encourage, and his
 Grace to sustain me? Nay, but *draw us,*
 Blessed Jesu, and *we will run after thee!*
we will follow thee, O thou Lamb of God,
whithersoever thou goest! Particularly we
 will often resort to that lively affecting
 Representation of thy Death and Suffer-
 ings, the Sacrament of thy Body and
 Blood, which thou hast instituted for us.
There we will inure ourselves to the
 Contemplation of *Christ* crucified, and
 to the Contempt of all the vain Glories
 of this World, which were, together
 with thee, nailed to thy Cross; of all
 the bewitching, but empty Pleasures of
 Life, with which we are surrounded.
There we will endeavour to instruct our-
 selves in those holy Lessons of Resigna-
 tion, Humility, Patience, and Perseve-
 rance unto Death, which thou in thy
 Gospel hast taught us; and to furnish
 ourselves

ourselves with such Spiritual Supplies of S E R M.
Grace, as may enable us to trace the VI.
suffering Example, which thou hast set 
us; that so resembling thee in Meekness,
Piety, and Purity *here*, we may also re-
semble thee in Happiness and Glory *here-*
after!

Now unto him that loved us, and Rev. i. 5,
washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, ^{6.}
and hath made us Kings and Priests unto
God, and his Father; to Him be all Glory
and Honour ascribed in all Assemblies of
the Saints! Amen.

Some

17. The following are the names of the persons who have been identified as having been in contact with the subject during the period of the investigation:

Some REASONS assigned for
OUR SAVIOUR'S

Appearing chiefly to the
APOSTLES after his Resurrection;
And his Manner of Converſing with
them, represented.

Some Reasons: alleged for

OUR SAVIOUR:

Applying chiefly to the

Posters which his Majesty

in his Manner of Counting with
them, repeating

*Some Reasons assigned for our Saviour's
appearing chiefly to his Apostles after
his Resurrection; and his Manner of
conversing with them, represented:*

IN A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

Westminster-Abbey

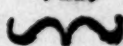
On Easter Day, 1718.

ACTS i. 3.

*To whom also he shewed himself alive af-
ter his Passion by many infallible Proofs,
being seen of them forty Days, and
speaking of the Things pertaining to
the Kingdom of God.*

'TIS a just Observation of St. Chry-
sostom, that though the Apostles
were allowed to be present with our
Lord,

SERM.
VII.



SERM. Lord, and to behold him, when ascending up into Heaven, yet they were not permitted to see him in the Act of arising from the Dead; because their Testimony was requisite in the one Case, to establish our Faith, but not in the other. It was fit they should be Eyewitnesses of his Ascent; else, they had not been able to attest the Truth of that Matter of Fact, the Knowledge of which they could not afterwards have attained otherwise than by Revelation; but it was no ways necessary that they should see him, when he broke loose from the *Grave*, in order to their bearing witness of his Resurrection; since it was sufficient to that Purpose, if they saw, and conversed with him, *after* he was risen. And that they did so, all the Evangelists inform us, particularly *St. Luke*, in the Words of the Text: *To whom also* [i. e. unto the Apostles, whom he had chosen, which are the concluding Words of the next preceeding Verse] *he shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them*
forty

forty Days, and speaking of the Things **SERM.**
pertaining to the Kingdom of God. **VII.**

The Observations I intend to suggest
from these Words, may be reduced un-
der the three following Heads.

First, Our Saviour's continuing forty **I.**
Days upon Earth, after he arose.

Secondly, His appearing throughout **II.**
that time *chiefly* to his Apostles. And

Thirdly, The Manner of his spend- **III.**
ing his Time with them. Two Ac-
counts are given of it in the Text;
That by *many infallible Proofs* he con-
vinced them of his being returned to
Life, and that he discoursed to them
of *things pertaining to the Kingdom of*
God.

The *First* Point that may deserve **I.**
your Attention is, our Saviour's Conti-
nuance upon Earth for forty Days after
he arose.

That

SERM. That he did so continue, is certain,

VII. and as certain, that, for many wise Reasons, known to God alone, and as unnecessary, as they are impossible to be by us

discovered, it was requisite that he should so continue: but those, which the Scripture hath pointed out to us, we may warrantably assign. And from thence it appears, that his Stay here upon Earth after his Resurrection, was intended for the Good of his Church, which he was about to establish, and for the Instruction of his Apostles in all things relating to the great Work, in which he was about to employ them.

They doubted of the Truth of his Resurrection; and therefore he stayed to give them such convincing Proofs, and Assurances of it, as might enable them to convince others, and become Authentick Witnesses of that great Matter of Fact, upon which, as upon a chief Corner Stone, the whole Frame of his Religion was to be founded.

They laboured under great Prejudices, in relation to his Character and Suffer-

Sufferings, and expected that by Him S E R M.
the Kingdom should have been restored VII.
to *Israel*. These Prejudices he himself
resolved to remove, and dispel; to in-
form them of the Spiritual Nature of
his Kingdom, of the Ends for which,
and the Methods by which it was to be
erected and propagated.

Sorrow had overwhelmed their Hearts
upon the Loss of him; and therefore,
upon his Return to Life, he staid some
time with them, to comfort and cheer
them. They were by Degrees to be
Weaned from their Fondness for his
Person, and their Desire of his Bodily
Presence; and to this end it was requi-
site, that he should not withdraw him-
self from their Sight at once, but ap-
pear, and disappear to them at fit In-
tervals; discontinuing, and resuming his
Conversation with them in such a man-
ner, as might best dispose them to be wil-
ling entirely to part with him.

He was leisurely to satisfy them, that
it was *expedient for him to go away*, since John. xvi.
if he went not away, the Comforter would 7.
not come; but if he departed, he would

SERM. *send him unto them; and that when He,*
 VII. *the Spirit of Truth, was come, he would*
 John xvi. *guide them into all Truth, bring all things*
 13. *to their Remembrance, and shew them*
things to come; would impart to them all
Spiritual Powers, Gifts, and Graces, and
fill them with all Consolation and Joy
in believing, and, by that means, make
an Amends to them for his own Bodily
Absence. For the Reception of this
Comforter, for the Entertainment of
this Heavenly Guest he was to prepare,
and qualify them, that, when he arriv-
ed, he might find them meet to be Par-
takers of his blessed Influences and Il-
luminations.

These Accounts of our Saviour's Continuance upon Earth for some time after he arose, are plainly enough asserted, or intimated in holy Writ; and therefore we may build upon them with Assurance. And may we not also, without Presumption, although with less Certainty, venture to say, That he intended, by this means, to add one yet further Proof to those he had already given,
 of

of his exceeding Love to his Spouse, the Church, of his great and disinterested Concern for the Good of Souls? For,

S E R M.
VII.
~~~~~

though from the Moment of his Resurrection he was entitled to that Glory, which his Humiliation had purchased, yet would he not immediately enter into it: He snatched not at the Reward, the high Reward of his Sufferings, with Eagerness and Haste; but delayed for some time his solemn Inauguration to the Regal Office, his taking Possession of the Joys of Heaven, and sitting on the Right Hand of God, while there was any thing yet left undone for his Church, and his Elect, which it was requisite for him to transact here in Person. A noble Instance of Self-denial! which seems to have wrought mightily in his Apostles, and to have produced excellent Fruits; particularly in *St. Paul*, who, though he earnestly desired to be *absent from the Body, and present with the Lord, to depart and be with Christ*; yet, for the Sake of his Flock here below, repressed those Desires, and was content-

SERM. ed to want, what he so earnestly long-  
 VII. ed after: *To abide in the Flesh* (said he  
 Phil. i. to them) *is more needful for You*; and on  
 24. that Account, and that only, he chose  
 to abide in it.

Expedient therefore it was for the  
 Disciples of *Christ*, that he should tarry  
*some time* with them after he arose: And  
*that time* was, it seems, *forty Days*; a  
 Circumstance, not to be neglected by  
 us, since the Pen of St. *Luke* hath thought  
 fit to record it; probably, for this Rea-  
 son,— Because *Moses*, and *Elijah*, the  
 Types of *Christ*, on two very solemn  
 Occasions, and *Christ* himself, just be-  
 fore he publicly exercised his Ministry,  
 had for the same Number of Days re-  
 tired into the Wilderness. Our Lord  
 therefore having, in Conformity with  
 these Types, taken forty Days to pre-  
 pare himself for the Discharge of his  
 Prophetick Offices on Earth, did in like  
 manner retire, as it were, and separate  
 himself for forty Days also, e're he en-  
 tered upon his Regal and Mediatorial  
 Offices in Heaven, and there sat at the  
 Right

*Chiefly to his Apostles.*

18 I

Right Hand of Power, making Intercession to God for us. S E R M. VII.

But I proceed to what I have to offer to you on the

*Second Particular, Our Saviour's appearing, throughout this time, chiefly to his Apostles.* II.

There are indeed two Instances of his appearing to others than the Apostles, *i. e.* to the Women at the Sepulchre, and to the Five hundred Brethren mentioned by *St. Paul*: To which some add a third, his appearing to two Disciples on the way towards *Emmaus*; the Relation of *St. Luke* (as they apprehend) leaving it doubtful, whether these were of the Number of the Eleven, or only Disciples at large. But these Instances were rare, and little Stress therefore is laid upon them by the holy Writers; who generally place the whole Proof of the Resurrection of *Christ*, upon the Apostles Testimony, because they saw him most frequently, and conversed most familiarly



SERM. miliarly with him: and therefore he is  
 VII. \* said here, by St. *Luke*, to have shewed  
 Acts x. himself alive to the *Apostles* whom he had  
 40, 41. chosen; and by St. *Peter* to have shewed  
 himself openly, not to all the *People*, but  
 unto *Witnesses* chosen before of *God*, even  
 to *Us*, [i. e. to *Us*, the *Apostles*] who did  
 eat and drink with him after he arose from  
 the *Dead*.

Now the Reasons of his appearing  
 chiefly to the *Apostles*, are manifest:  
 they have been already in some measure  
 suggested; and there may be Occasion,  
 in what follows, further to explain them.  
 But, why he appeared not to *Others*, be-  
 sides the *Apostles*, why not to such as  
 were averse to his Person and Doctrine,  
 to the *Sanhedrim* itself, or even to all the  
*People*, the whole Body of the *Jews*  
 then assembled at the Passover, is a Que-  
 stion, that may seem to require, and  
 deserve a particular Answer: since Infir-  
 mity on this Head finds room to object,  
 That the most effectual Way of proving  
 his *Resurrection*, had been, to have made  
 his *Enemies* his *Witnesses*; whereas our  
 Saviour

Saviour manifested himself only to his S E R M.  
*Friends and Followers.* VII.

He did so, and with very good Reason. For

1. It was no ways fit, that such a Favour should be indulged to his Murderers; to those, who had treated this Messenger, and his Message with Scorn and Blasphemy, had resisted the Evidence of all his Miracles, and notwithstanding the Sanctity of his Life and Doctrine, had pursued him to his Cross with such a Complication of Obstinacy, Malice, and Cruelty, as can in no other Instance be paralleled. Had *Christ* appeared, after he arose, to Men of so flagitious a Character, his Conduct, in that Case, would have been so far from promoting the Interests of his Gospel (which is the Doctrine of Holiness) that it would have given a great, and dangerous Encouragement to Wickedness, to Mens *continuing* and abounding *in Sin*, that so *Grace might abound*. So far was our Lord from being obliged to afford those who crucified him, such an extraordinary

S E R M. ordinary Proof of his Resurrection, that he  
 VII. might with great Justice have denied them  
 any Evidence at all of it, and not have suffered even the Testimony of his Apostles concerning it to have reached them. But,

2. The only Reason assignable, why God should have tried such an Experiment as this, is, a Probability of converting the whole *Jewish* Nation by the Means of it. But Experience, and our Lord's express Decision in the Case assure us, that this End would not have been attained by it. Had he appeared at Mid-day to *all the People*, yet *all the People* would not have believed in him. The sincere and honest-hearted *Jews* would have surrendered to such an Evidence, as they did afterwards to that which was given by the Apostles; but the malicious and obstinate would have found out Colours and Excuses, to evade the Force of it. What! (might one of them have said) though there has been an Apparition in the Likeness of *Jesus*, whom we crucified, must we necessarily from thence conclude, that he is really alive? No such matter!



matter! This is no new thing; Sorcery hath  
 often effected it: *Samuel* was dead, and  
 in his Grave, even then, when the Witch  
 of *Endor* made his Likeness appear be-  
 fore *Saul*. Thus would they have rea-  
 soned against their own Reason, and their  
 very Senses, and have kept their Infideli-  
 ty, in spite of such a Demonstration; ac-  
 cording to that Saying of our Lord, which  
 he uttered, not perhaps without an Eye  
 to this very Supposition: *If they bear not*  
*Moses and the Prophets, neither will they*  
*be persuaded, though one rose (and appear-*  
*ed to them) from the Dead.*

S E R M.

VII.

1 Sam.

xxviii.

14.

Luke xvi.

31.

In Fact, the Resurrection of *Lazarus*,  
 and their conversing with him afterwards  
 had not convinced them; and we may  
 be sure, that they, who could impute  
 this great Miracle, and the others wrought  
 by our Saviour, while alive, to the Pow-  
 er of Magick, and a Confederacy with  
*Beelzebub*, would have found out a Way  
 of arguing themselves out of the Certain-  
 ty of our Lord's Resurrection, though  
 they themselves had had an Ocular Assu-  
 rance concerning it. However

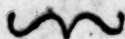
3. Should



SERM.

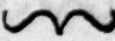
3. Should we suppose, that such a

VII.



glaring Proof of his Resurrection could not have been resisted by them, yet it ought not to have been indulged to them for this very Reason; because it was *irresistible*. God never intended to *compel*, but only to *persuade* us into a Reception of Divine Truth; and we are properly said to be persuaded, when we close with such Motives and Arguments as are sufficient indeed to convince us, but such however, by which we need not be convinced, unless we please. All beyond this is Force, not Persuasion; and is very unfit therefore to be applied to Creatures endued with Liberty and Reason, and who are to be rewarded, or punished, according as they employ it. The Belief of the Gospel was designed to be the Test of sincere and ingenuous Minds, and as such, was to be attended with mighty Blessings and Benefits; for *blest are they which have not seen, and yet have believed*. But what Reason, what Room is there for blessing those, who shall on that Account alone *believe* the Gospel,

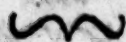
Joh. xx.  
29.

Gospel, because they are surrounded every SERM.  
Way with so much Light and Conviction, VII.  
that it is absolutely impossible for them   
*not* to believe it? Such a Faith can have  
no Degree of Desert in it, and is there-  
fore absolutely incapable of any Reward.

The true Question in this Case is,  
Whether the Proof of *Christs* Resur-  
rection, by the Testimony of the Apo-  
stles, be not satisfactory and full, abun-  
dantly full to all the Purposes of Con-  
viction? If it be, are we not very unrea-  
sonable, and absurd in complaining,  
that a Fact was not attested with ten  
times more Evidence than was needful?  
*Nay, but who art thou, O Man, who,*  
whilst thou acknowledgest the Wisdom  
and Goodness of God to be sufficiently  
justified in his own Method, wilt yet  
prescribe to him the Use of thine, be-  
cause it seems to thee more fit and conve-  
nient? At this rate, how many things  
are there, which we (full of our own  
Wisdom and Schemes) should think fit  
to have been done, which yet God hath  
not thought fit to do for us? We per-  
haps

SERM. haps may think it very convenient, that

VII.

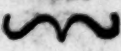


we should at first have been made impeccable, and secured from falling: We, upon a View of the several Heresies that have sprung from the Misinterpretation of Holy Writ, may judge, it would have been much better for the Church, if the Scripture had been so clear in every Point, that no well-meaning Man could have mistaken the Sense of it: at least, we might be apt to imagine it highly expedient, that God should have appointed some Infallible Judge, to whom we might have resorted for the clearing up of all Difficulties, and ending all Controversies. But in all these

1 Cor. iii.  
19.

*Cases the Wisdom of Man is Foolishness with God*; for he hath ordered things quite otherwise. He placed us indeed in such a State at first, from which we could not fall, without the utmost Folly and Weakness; but from which however fall we did, as soon almost as we were possessed of that Happiness. He gave us a Rule of Faith and Manners, easy enough to be understood by honest humble



humble Minds; but capable of being SERM.  
strained, perverted, and abused to ill VII.  
Purposes by proud opinionative Readers.   
He left every Man to judge for  
himself in Matters of Religion; and yet  
so, as to leave him without Excuse also,  
if he made an ill Use of that Judgment.  
And in like manner hath he dealt with  
us, in relation to those great Matters of  
Fact, upon which the Truth of our Re-  
ligion is founded: He hath built the Be-  
lief of them upon such Proofs, as cannot  
fail of convincing those, who are sincere,  
and willing to be informed; and yet  
such as leave room for little Exceptions  
and Cavils to Men of perverse and dis-  
putative Tempers, who will not allow  
of any Evidence, in behalf of Christia-  
nity, how strong and irrefragable so-  
ever, if they can but imagine to them-  
selves any Circumstance, whereby it  
might possibly have been made yet some-  
what stronger; and do therefore, pre-  
tend to doubt of the Truth of *Christ's*  
Resurrection, because he did not appear  
*to all the People*, to his very Prosecutors  
and



SERMON. and Murderers. I have proved, that it

VII. was highly improper, unnecessary, and unreasonable, that he should so have appeared; and that it was expedient, highly expedient (because in all respects sufficient) that he should appear only to his Friends and Followers, and, amongst them, chiefly to his Apostles, upon the single Credit of whose Testimony the Belief of this great Article was to depend. It remains that I should, in the

III. *Third* and last place, consider, How our Saviour spent his time with them.

The Text tells us, that he employed it, partly in giving them *many infallible Proofs* of his being returned to Life, and partly in discoursing *to them of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*. By the *one* he enabled them to prove the Divine Authority of his Mission, and by the *other* he instructed them in all the Parts of his heavenly Doctrine; and by *both* together he qualified them for a successful Propagation of Christianity.

i. He

1. He shewed himself alive to them SERM.

ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις, by many clear Signs VII.  
 and Tokens, *many infallible Proofs* (as  
 our Translation renders it.) And such  
 indeed they were in every respect. For  
 he appeared to them, not *once* only, but  
*often*; not only to *some* of them, when  
 separated from the rest, but to *all* of  
 them, when assembled together, and  
 when they were capable of satisfying  
 each other by Enquiries made at the  
 same time into the Truth of the same  
 Fact, and consequently of giving an  
 united Testimony to it. He appeared  
 to them not in the Dark, as Spectres do,  
 but in broad Day-light; sometimes at  
 Places where he had before appointed to  
 meet them, sometimes occasionally, as  
 they were travelling on the Way, or sit-  
 ting at Meat, when their Minds were  
 freest from the Clouds of Melancholy,  
 and their Imaginations least apt to be  
 imposed upon. He conversed with them  
 at such times in the most easy and fami-  
 liar Manner: He eat and drank with  
 them, and gave them, by that means,  
Leisure

SERM. Leisure to recover themselves from that

VII.  Surprise, and those Fears, which the first Sight of him might occasion, and with composed Minds to hearken to all he should say to them. He not only repeated these Conversations often, he continued them long; as appears from the Subject of some of them, particularly of That, where he is said to have begun at Moses, and all the Prophets, and to have expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. And, that nothing might be wanting to satisfy them to the uttermost, he was contented, not only to be seen and heard, but even handled by them: *Reach hither*, said he to one of them in the Presence of the rest, *thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless, but believing.* Is it possible for Scepticism itself to indulge its wild Suspicions so far, as to think, the Apostles might all this time be in a Dream, or under a strong and continued Delusion? They who think, or speak thus, seem to be under

Luke  
xxiv. 27.

Joh. xx.  
27.



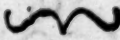
under a Judicial Infatuation themselves: SERM.  
 for they might, with as much Probabi- VII.  
 lity and Colour of Reason, affirm, that  
 all the Facts, recorded in the gravest and  
 most authentick Writers, are Figments,  
 and the mere Inventions of wanton Pens;  
 that there is no way of distinguishing  
 between Reality and Appearance, even  
 in the common Occurrences of Life,  
 and consequently no Difference between  
 a Romance and an History. Certain it is,  
 that, unless the Apostles be admitted as  
 good Witnesses in such a Case as this,  
 and the Truth of what they relate be  
 allowed, there is an End of the Credi-  
 bility of all Human Testimony.

2. But as our Saviour, during his forty Days Stay on Earth, fully enabled his Apostles to attest his Resurrection, so did he qualify them duly to preach his Doctrine; for he taught them *τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, i. e. to the Gospel Dispensation, of which they were to be the Ministers, and to his Church, which they were to gather, constitute, and govern.



S E R M. vern. Of these things the Apostles were  
 VII. then very ignorant; and though for their  
 full and final Instruction, our Lord referred them to the Comforter, yet he himself was willing previously to instruct and comfort them; to teach them the first Rudiments of Christian Knowledge, and to fill their Hearts with longing Expectations of those further Degrees of Light and Joy, with which they were afterwards to be blessed. This Promise he had made them the very Night before his Passion. *I will not leave you comfortless*, said he, even for so long a time, as till the promised Comforter shall come; *I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the World seeth me no more; but ye see me.—At that Day* (the Day of my Return to you) *You shall know that I am in my Father, and You in Me.* Ye shall understand somewhat of that Mystical Union that is between my Father and Me, and between Me and my Church, the Society of Christian Believers. Without all Question, what he then promised, he now performed; and therefore,

Joh. xiv.  
 18, &c.

therefore, we may be sure, discoursed S E R M.  
to them concerning the great Articles VII.  
of our Faith, the high Mysteries of Chri-  
stianity. 

The Scripture Accounts of these things  
are short: However, even from these  
short Accounts we learn, that he com-  
manded them to make Profelytes in all  
Nations, and to baptize them in the Matth.  
*Name of the Father, and of the Son, and* xxviii  
*of the Holy Ghost:* And we cannot  
doubt but that, when he directed this  
Form, he made some Discovery to them  
concerning the Nature and Offices of  
these Three Persons of the ever blessed  
Trinity, in whose Names they were to  
baptize.

He told them, that *all Power was given* Matth.  
*him, in Heaven, and in Earth;* and in xxviii. 18.  
virtue of that Power, he gave them  
also Power, not of baptizing only, but  
of remitting and retaining Sins. He  
*sent them, as he was sent by the Father;*  
and sufficiently directed them to send  
others, as they were sent, who were in  
like manner to continue that Mission, by  
the

S E R M. the Promise he made to *be with them always, even to the End of the World.*

VII.

Matth.

xxviii. 20.

Luke

xxiv. 30,

35.

Matth.

xxviii. 20.

The Sacrament of his Body and Blood he had instituted, while living; and now therefore he celebrated it together with them: *For he took Bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave unto them, and was known of them in thus breaking of Bread:* a Phrase, which in the *Acts* manifestly refers to the Eucharist; and may justly therefore be understood of it here, in the Story of our Saviour.

In a word, *he opened their Understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and all the Prophecies concerning himself;* and he bad them *teach all Nations to observe all things that he had commanded them:* Which two Passages comprize the Knowledge of what relates both to the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church, both to the Faith and Practice of a *Christian.*

But the chief Way of our Saviour's spending his Time with the Apostles, after he arose from the Dead, was, by affording them these Illustrious, these

Infal-



Infalible Proofs of the Truth of his SERM.  
Resurrection. And God be thanked VII.  
that he did so! since by thus settling  
his wavering Disciples in an unshaken  
Belief of this Truth, he enabled them;  
with the utmost Firmness and Constancy,  
to propagate their Belief of it, and  
even to seal their Testimony with their  
Blood; and hath by that means extended  
the Efficacy and Influence of  
those Infalible Proofs to *us* also, who  
live near Seventeen Ages, after they  
were given. *Our* Conviction depended  
upon *Theirs*, is derived from it, and  
proportioned to it. And in virtue therefore  
of the Evidence indulged to them  
(not for their Sakes alone, but for the  
Sake of all succeeding *Christians*) do  
we meet here this Day, with Joy and  
Thankfulness to celebrate this Festival,  
and to profess our Faith in Him, that  
*was dead, but is alive, was crucified,  
but is risen, and now sitteth at the Right  
Hand of the Father.*

Blessed indeed, in many respects, beyond  
*us*, blessed were the Eyes that saw  
these



<sup>S</sup> E R M. these Things, and the Ears that heard  
 VII. them, for they saw, and heard, and be-  
 lieved; but blessed also are *We*, who re-  
 ceive their Testimony, blessed even be-  
 yond them, in this respect, if *not seeing,*  
*we do yet believe.* The Lips of Truth  
 have assured us, that in this Case there  
 is one Beatitude more reserved for Us,  
 than belonged even to the Apostles them-  
 selves, if we believe the Resurrection of  
*Christ* upon their Report; whereas They  
 believed it only, upon the Testimony  
 of their Senses.— Having therefore these  
 Promises, dearly beloved, wait with  
 Patience, *that the Tryal of your Faith* (as  
 St. Peter speaks) *may be found unto Praise*  
*and Honour and Glory at the appearing*  
*of Jesus Christ!* whom having not seen,  
 I trust, ye love; in whom, though now  
 ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoyce  
 with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory;  
 receiving, in his due time, the End of  
 your Faith, even the Salvation of your  
 Souls.

1 Pet. i.  
 7, 8.

Rom. xv.  
 13.

*And may the God of Hope fill you with*  
*all Joy and Peace in believing, that you*  
*may*

may abound in Hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost.

SERM.

VII.



I cannot dismiss this Reflection, without applying it to the blessed Sacrament, of which we are going to partake, and by partaking of which, we profess in a most especial Manner to exercise our Faith in an invisible Jesus. He is there really, effectually, though Spiritually, present; the Eye of Faith can behold him, though that of Sense cannot: for *his Flesh is Meat indeed, and his Blood is Drink indeed.* That Bread, and that Wine, which he there imparts to us, shall become his very Body and Blood, in such a Sense, as he intended it, to every worthy, and faithful Receiver: It shall convey to us all the Benefits of his Body broken, and his Blood poured out on the Cross; and unite us to him in our Bodies and Souls, after such a Wonderful Manner, as none but they, who feel it, can conceive, and even they, who conceive it, cannot express. Let us look then through the outward Symbols or Signs, to the Thing

John vi.

55.

S E R M. signified by them; and carry in our Ears,  
 VII. as we approach the Holy Table, that  
 Voice of our Saviour to his doubting  
 Disciple, *Be not faithless, but believing.*  
 Blessed and Happy is He, who, in this  
 Instance also, though he doth not see,  
 yet doth believe; he shall be vitally  
 nourished, and cherished by the Food  
 of this Paschal Lamb, and his Soul shall  
 be made Joyful in the Strength of this  
 new Wine.

To that *Lamb of God, without Spot  
 or Blemish*, whose Sacrifice we are now  
 about to commemorate, and represent,  
 even the Lamb that was slain for our  
 Sins, and raised again for our Justifica-  
 tion, as on this Day, together with the  
 Father, and the Divine Spirit, be ascribed  
 all Honour, Might, Adoration, and  
 Praise, now and evermore.

MIRACLES

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# MIRACLES

The most proper Way of proving the  
DIVINE AUTHORITY  
OF ANY  
RELIGION.

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*Miracles the most proper Way of proving  
the Divine Authority of any Religion.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

*Westminster-Abbey*

*On Whitsunday, 1716.*

---

MARK xvi. 20.

*And they went forth and preached every  
where; the Lord working with them,  
and confirming the Word with Signs  
following.*

IN these Words, which shut up the SERM.  
Gospel of St. Mark, we have an Ac- VIII.  
count of the Means, by which the Preach-  
ing

SERM. ing of the Apostles became so wonder-  
 VIII. fully Operative and Successful. It was  
 not from any mighty Talent of Persua-  
 sion, any extraordinary Faculty of Reasoning, with which they were endued; it was not by any intrinsic Evidences of Truth, which the distinguishing Doctrines they preached carried with them; nor by any other Method purely Human and Natural; but by a Divine Power and Assistance, which accompanied them in every Step they took, and miraculously blessed their Endeavours. *The Lord worked with them, and confirmed the Word with Signs following.*

By Signs, in Holy Writ, are meant all such wonderful Operations, as are above the Skill of Man to contrive, above the Power of any thing in Nature, any thing but the God of Nature himself, or some Agent by him specially Commissioned and empowered, to perform. Such as speaking strange Languages on the sudden, the Miracle of this Day; curing inveterate Diseases in an Infant, by a Word only; giving Life

to the Dead, or Eyes to one that was SE R M.  
born blind. These things being done VIII.  
to signify who are appointed by God, as  
the Messengers of his Will to Men, are on  
that Account fitly termed *Signs*; and of  
these the Holy Scripture every where  
speaks, as the most proper and full Evi-  
dences of a Divine Mission and Autho-  
rity.

When *Moses* was sent by God to the  
Children of *Israel*, he desires some Cre-  
dentials, by which it might appear,  
that God had sent him; and God, in  
Answer to his Request, arms him with  
the Power of Miracles: *Cast thy Rod up-  
on the Ground, says he, and it shall be-  
come a Serpent.—That they may believe  
that the Lord God of their Fathers hath  
appeared unto thee.* Exod. iv.  
3. 5.

Our Saviour constantly appeals to his  
Miracles, as to a clear and sufficient  
Proof of his Doctrine: *The Works that  
I do, says he, They bear Witness of me.* Joh. v. 36.  
And he carries the Argument so far, as  
to make the whole Guilt of Mens Infi-  
delity turn singly on this Article.—*If  
I had*



S E R M. *I had not done among them, says he, the*  
 VIII. *Works which none other Man did, they*  
 ~~~~~ *had not bad Sin.*

John xv.
24.

Acts ii.
22.

Acts xiv.
3.

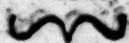
And thus also reasoned his *Apostles* and *Evangelists*. *Jesus of Nazareth, says St. Peter, a Man approved of God among you by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of you. The Lord gave Testimony, says St. Luke, to the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by the Apostles Hands. And here in the Text, They went forth, says St. Mark, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following.*

Miracles therefore being the Foundation, upon which both the *Mosaic* and *Christian Revelations* stand; it may be of use to shew, how properly they were pitched upon by God for this purpose. And this will appear, if we consider

I. *First, The common Sense and Opinion of Mankind on this Head.*

Secondly,

Secondly, The General Nature of this Sort of Evidence. And



Thirdly, Some peculiar Properties and Characters of it. III.

I.
First, What the Common Sense and Reasoning of Mankind has been on this Head, will appear from this single Reflection; That all Religions, whether true or false, not only those of *Moses* and *Christ*, but even the Heathenish Superstitions of every kind have, at their first setting out, endeavoured to countenance themselves by Real, or Pretended Miracles. *Numa* at *Rome*, *Amida* and *Brama* in the *East*, and *Mango Copal* in *Peru*, did, as History informs us, thus go about to persuade their Followers into a Belief of those Religious Opinions, which they introduced, and into the Practice of their several Sacred Rites and Ceremonies. Even *Mahomet* himself is said to have made some faint Attempts this Way, though, when he mis-

fed

BERM sed of Success, he retreated to the great
 VIII. and standing Miracle of the *Alcoran*,
 which was, he said, sent immediately
 from Heaven to him by the Angel *Gabriel*.— So that Miracles have been secretly and unanimously agreed upon by all Men, as the proper Medium of proving any Religion to be of Divine Appointment; else, the Founders of all Religions would not thus indifferently have appealed to them; nor would they, who embraced those Religions, have so universally surrendered themselves up to their Authority.

I know, this Argument is by the Enemies of Revelation turn'd another Way, and made use of to prove, that since *All* Religions have, at their first Rise, equally pretended to Miracles, and *Most* of them without Grounds; therefore the *rest* have done so too: at least, that this Way of Proof, which hath so often deceived Men, can never with any Certainty be relied upon. But this surely is a very unreasonable Way of arguing; since, at the same rate, it might
 be

be proved, that there is no such thing as S E R M.
Truth, or Reason in the World: for all VIII.
Men on all sides lay claim to it; and 
yet the far greater Part of Mankind must
needs be deceived. The proper Infe-
rence in this Case is, not that, because
most Men, who would be thought Ma-
sters of Truth, are not, therefore there
is no such thing as Truth; but on the
contrary, that Truth is somewhere to
be found, else all Men every where
would not equally lay claim to it.

There are many Empiricks in the
World, who pretend to infallible Me-
thods of curing all Patients. Because
these are Cheats and Impostors, does it
follow, that there are no able and skil-
ful Physicians, no healing Virtues in
Herbs and Minerals? Or rather, may
it not from hence be strongly con-
cluded, that there must certainly be an
Art of Medicine, built upon true Prin-
ciples, and founded in the Nature of
things; because so many Men every
Day advance groundless Claims to it,
and so many others give in to their

SERM. Frauds and Delusions? Were there no
 VIII. Real and True Remedies, there would
 be no Foundation for such Men to amuse the World with false ones; but they would, as soon as they appeared, be immediately exploded.

In like manner, if no true Miracles had ever been done in Proof of a Divine Revelation, it is impossible to conceive, how so many false Religions should have been supported by the Pretence of them, or how the Argument from Miracles should at all times have had so strong an Influence upon the Minds of Men. But

II. *Secondly, As the Common Sense and Opinion of Mankind favours this sort of Proof; so will it appear to be in itself highly Reasonable, and Necessary, if we consider the General Nature of it.*

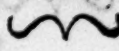
When any Person pretends a Divine Commission to publish a New Doctrine; in order to procure its Reception, 'tis requisite he should be furnished with
 some

some competent Motives of Credibility; SERM.
VIII.
he must, by some Infallible Sign or Token, shew, that he was really sent on

that Errand, and not expect to be believed on his own bare Word and Affirmation. Now this Sign, or Token, what can it be, but his doing somewhat, which it is on all hands confessed, that no one, but God, can do? that is, in other Terms, how can a Man prove his Mission, but by a Miracle? Will it be said, that the Doctrine he brings, may be so pure and holy, and every way worthy of God, as to carry the Stamp and Evidence of its own Divine Original? that the very Nature of the Message may clearly and fully evince, from whence the Messenger came? I see not how this can well be. A Doctrine may be very Holy and Good, and every way agreeable to the Conceptions we have of God, and yet not be of Divine Revelation. The Philosophers among the Heathens uttered many such Truths, as might have become them, had they been really Inspired; and yet

S E R M. we believe not, for this Reason, that
 VIII. they *were* Inspired, but that they spake
 ~~~~~ merely from the Dictates of their own  
 Reason, and from the General Consent  
 of the Wifest Part of Mankind: and so  
 may any other Man also, let the Do-  
 ctrine he teaches be never so just and ho-  
 ly, unless he produces somewhat be-  
 side the Doctrine itself, to prove that it  
 was revealed to him. For though the  
 Badness of any Doctrine, and its Dis-  
 agreeableness to the Eternal Rules of  
 Right Reason, be a certain Sign that it  
 did *not* come from God, yet the Good-  
 ness of it can be no infallible Proof that  
 it *did*. Indeed when a good Man pu-  
 blishes a good Doctrine, and affirms that  
 he had it from God, we may, for his  
 own Sake, and for his Doctrine's Sake,  
 be disposed to give Credit to him; we  
 may be inclined, perhaps, rather to be  
 of Opinion, that the Thing is as he  
 says, than that it is not; but we cannot  
 be wrought up into a firm Belief, an  
 unshaken Assurance concerning it, mere-  
 ly by his Affirmation. He may, at the  
 Bottom,



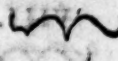
Bottom, not be so good a Man as he SERM.  
seems to be; and may therefore (it is VIII.  
possible) intend to deceive me; or he   
may have been himself deceived, and  
mistaken a Dream, or strong Imagina-  
tion, for a Reality. Such things have  
sometimes happened, and such things  
may therefore happen again; and, while  
I have these Doubts and Possibilities be-  
fore my Eyes, 'tis impossible I should  
embrace his Authority with the full and  
entire Assent of my Mind. But if to  
his own solemn Affirmation he adds  
the Performance of some Work, which,  
all things considered, I have the utmost  
Reason to think he could not perform,  
without immediate Divine Assistance;  
that indeed, and nothing less than that,  
is a Proof, which I ought not, and am  
not able to withstand.

It will, perhaps, be farther objected,  
that, if the Doctrine taught appears to  
be in itself good, and reasonable, 'tis  
no matter whether it is proved to be of  
immediate Divine Authority. For a  
good Man will receive a Doctrine evi-  
dently



S E R M. dently good and reasonable, whether a-  
 VIII. ny one be divinely Inspired to preach it,  
 or not: and a Doctrine evidently evil  
 and absurd, he will not receive, on the  
 Account of whatever pretended Inspira-  
 tion. And therefore, what need of  
 Miracles to make way for an Opinion,  
 which, if agreeable to Reason, will make  
 its own Way without their Assistance;  
 and if contrary to Reason, can never be  
 entertained by a reasonable Creature,  
 though it should have ten thousand Mi-  
 racles to support it?

Now it must be confessed, that this  
 Objection is so far of Force, as it re-  
 lates to *Moral* Truths, and to whatever  
 is discoverable by the Light of Natural  
 Reason. There is indeed no Necessity  
 for Miracles to induce a Belief of *These*;  
 nor is it pretended, that God ever em-  
 ployed them to this Purpose, to con-  
 vince Men either of his Being, or Pro-  
 vidence, or of the Eternal Differences of  
 Good and Evil; because *These* Truths  
 were of themselves sufficiently obvious  
 and plain, and needed not a Divine Te-  
 stimony

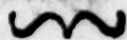
stimony to make them plainer. But the SER M.  
Truths, which are necessary in this VIII.  
Manner to be attested, are those,   
which are of Positive Institution; those,  
which, if God had not pleased to reveal  
them, Human Reason could not have  
discovered; and those, which, even now  
they are revealed, Human Reason can-  
not fully account for, and perfectly  
comprehend. Such, for Example, are the  
Doctrines of Baptism and the Supper of  
the Lord, of the Resurrection of the  
same Body, of the Distinction of Per-  
sons in the Unity of the Divine Essence,  
and of the Salvation of Mankind by the  
Blood and Intercession of *Jesus*. It is  
this kind of Truth that God is proper-  
ly said to Reveal; Truths, of which,  
unless revealed, we should have always  
continued ignorant; and 'tis in order  
only to prove these Truths to have been  
really revealed, that we affirm Miracles  
to be Necessary. And though in the Bo-  
dy of the Revelation itself, known and  
unknown Truths may be mixed, Do-  
ctrines Evident by the Light of Nature,

SERM. with such as we receive only by Inspiration; yet 'tis for the Sake of the Latter  
 VIII. of these, that Miracles must be done, not at all on the Account of the Former. So that Reason being no Competent Judge of those Doctrines, to the Confirmation of which Miracles are specially adapted, cannot, I say, by examining into the Nature of such Doctrines, determine, that a Proof of them by Miracles is needless.

Hitherto I have only considered the General Nature of Miracles, as they are Acts of Supernatural Power, necessarily attendant on Revealed Doctrines, in order to promote their Reception.

III. *Thirdly*, I proceed now, in the last place, to shew, how well they are suited to this Purpose, by reason of some *Peculiar Characters and Properties* that belong to them. For, *First*, They are extremely fit to awaken Men's Attention.— *Secondly*, They are the shortest and most Expeditious way of Proof.— And, *Thirdly*, They are an Argument of the most Universal Force and Efficacy, equally

equally reaching all Capacities and Understandings. S E R M. VIII.



I. In order to the Propagation of a New Doctrine, the first thing requisite is, To create Attention, and rouse the Minds of Men, possessed with Prejudices, immersed in Pleasures, or Business, into an impartial Consideration of what is proposed. And this is best effected by Miracles; which being strange and unusual Events, cannot fail of drawing Mens Eyes towards the Doer of them, and of commanding their Attention and Observance. Curiosity is the first Step towards Conviction; and when once Men are possessed with a due Regard for the Messenger, they will be sure to listen carefully to the Message he brings. The Fathers of the Eastern Mission knew this well, and being therefore destitute of the Power of Miracles, which might excite Men to enquire after their Opinions, and infuse a Reverence for their Persons, endeavoured to make up this Disadvantage another way, and gain Admission into the Presence



SERM. sence of the Princes and great Men of  
 VIII. the East, by some Curious and Surprizing Works of Art. And having in this manner raised an Opinion of themselves first, they preached the Gospel with some Degree of Success afterwards: their Performances in Mechanicks and Astronomy being instead of Miracles to them, by which they procured a favourable Hearing of the Doctrines they afterwards delivered.

2. 'Tis another great Advantage, which belongs to miracles, that they are the shortest and most expeditious Way of Proof. All other Ways of evincing the Divine Original of any Doctrine (supposing there were any such) must needs be long and laborious; such as it will take up much Time fully to explain and clear; and such therefore, as must operate but slowly, and can make no great Advances, in any one Man's Life, towards converting the World. For Instance, suppose the Truth and Credibility of a Revealed Doctrine could be made out, by shewing its Connection with

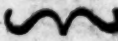
with, and Dependence upon other Truths, and by a regular Deduction of it, through a long Train of Consequences, from known and avowed Principles of Reason; yet would this be a very tedious and irksome Task, and would in a long Time gain but a little Ground upon an opinionative and disputing World. Had this been the Method made use of to propagate Christianity at first, how would the Course of it have been retarded? How impossible had it been for the Apostles to have obeyed their great Master's Commands, and to have preached the Gospel to all Nations? At this rate, it is probable, that, instead of traversing the several Parts of the Earth, and reducing Multitudes of every Nation and Climate to the Obedience of *Christ*, they had stuck in that very Spot, where they first entered upon their Ministry, and begun and finished all their Labours within the short Limits of *Palestine*. But by the Help of *Miracles*, they were enabled effectually to discharge their high Office:

*these*

SERM. *these* were Engines fitted and proportioned to the Work assigned to them.

~~~~~  
VIII. One Dead Man raised, or Blind Man restored to Sight, brought over Thousands to the Faith, who saw the thing done; and ten Thousands came in afterwards, upon the Report of it. Other kinds of Proofs were fitted only leisurely to loosen the Knots, which the Disputers of this World tied, in order to give the Apostles Disturbance in the Execution of their Ministry. But Miracles, like the Hero's Sword, divided these Entanglings at a Stroke, and at once made their Way through them.

3. The Third and last Advantage of this Way of Proof is, its *Universal Force and Efficacy*, as being equally adapted to all Capacities and Understandings.—Rational and Discursive Methods are fit only to be made use of upon Philosophers, Men of deep Reason and improved Minds; the generality of Mankind would be utterly insensible of their Force. The Lower, that is, the far greater Part of the World, are too much taken

taken up in providing the Necessaries of S E R M.
Life, to be at Leisure to consider long VIII.
Consequences, and weigh Arguments. 

Or had they Opportunities for such a Search, yet have they not the Abilities requisite to pursue it. To them therefore some plainer, and more sensible Proof must be addressed; somewhat that lies level to their Capacities, and of which they understand the Force at the first Proposal: and such a sort of Argument is that, which is drawn from Miracles. There is no Man of so rude and unpolished a Mind, no Man so stupid and insensible, but can carry his Reasoning thus far; That, whoever does such things, as he could not do, unless God were with him, if at the same time he affirms, that he received such and such Doctrines from God, we ought to believe him. There is no Subtlety, no Reach of Thought requisite, to make this Reflection; and this single Reflection is sufficient to make a Man a *Christian*. Whereas, if the World must have been convinced of old, as the Men, who doubt

S E R M. doubt of every thing, and disbelieve e-
 VIII. very thing, expect we should convince
 them now, by strict Demonstrations, and
 long intricate Reasonings; it is certain,
 that the greatest Part of Mankind had
 lain under an inevitable Necessity of con-
 tinuing Infidels.

We see then, that *the Foundation of
 God standeth sure*, that the Proof of the
 Christian Faith by Miracles is sound and
 satisfactory. Let us adhere to it steddi-
 ly, and devoutly adore the divine Wis-
 dom and Goodness, which contrived it
 for our Sakes! Let us not be moved by
 the little Cavils, and Exceptions, with
 which perverse and unreasonable Men
 are used to encounter it; but let us re-
 member, that, in this State of Imper-
 fection, there is scarce any Truth so
 bright and clear, but that an Industrious
 Stirret up of Doubts may do somewhat
 towards clouding and darkening it. Let
 us not *sit in the Seat, nor stand in the
 Way, nor walk in the Council of these
 Ungodly*; who studiously undermine
 Principles, and delight to affront the
 Common

of proving any Religion.

223

Common Sense of Mankind: who set S E R M.
up for a Repute by disbelieving every VIII.

thing, and are resolved to pay a Regard to nothing, but their own deep Penetration and Prudence. Let us preserve ourselves free from that sort of Caution and Reserve, which, lest it should be imposed upon by false Motives of Credibility, will close with none; and for very Fear of being deceived, takes the unavoidable Way towards being deceived, by equally suspecting every thing. God defend us from such a kind of Wariness as this! and grant that we may foolishly entertain some Falshood together with Truth, rather than be Wise to that Degree, as to esteem every thing a Falshood! that we may be weak enough to believe several Doctrines in Religion, that are Erroneous and Vain, rather than be so backward and hardy as to believe nothing at all! For certainly, as downright Credulity and Weakness has much the Advantage of Infidelity, with regard to the Ease and Peace of Mind it affords us in *This* World,

SERM. World, so is it more likely, if it errs,
 VIII. to be overlooked and pardoned by God
 in *Another*. I had rather be the most easy, tame, and resigned Believer in the most Gross and imposing Church in the World (I mean that of *Rome*) than one of those Great and Philosophical Minds, who stand upon their Terms with God, and study to hold out as long as they can, against the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the Arguments that are brought to prove them.

To that God, who *alone doth wondrous Things*, and is alone able to bring some proud Reasoners to acknowledge, that he *has done* them, be ascribed all Honour, Praise, and Power, now and forever!

THE

THE
Difficult Passages
OF
SCRIPTURE
VINDICATED

From such OBJECTIONS as are
usually made to them;

AND
Proper DIRECTIONS given, how we are
to use them.

VOL. III.

Q

Difficult Passages
OF
SCRIPTURE

AND
INDICATED
from their Objections as are
usually made to them;

AND
Proper Directions given, how we are
to use them.

The Difficult Passages of Scripture vindicated from such Objections as are usually made to them; and proper Directions given, how we are to use them:

IN THREE
S E R M O N S

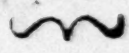
Preach'd at the

R O L L S

In the Year 1711.

2 PET. iii. 16.

In which are some things hard to be Understood, which they that are Unlearned and Unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.

ST. Peter, in this Chapter, employs S E R M.
his Pen, in fortifying the Minds of IX.
those Christians, to whom he writes, 
Q² against

SERM. against that Scorn and Mockery they
IX. met with from some Profane Men, who

disputed the Certainty of this World's
Dissolution, and of *Christ's* coming
to Judgment; and derided the Eager
Expectations of the first Believers con-

cerning it. *Where*, said they, *is the*
Ver. 4. *Promise of his Coming? for, since the*
Fathers fell asleep, all things continue,
as they were from the Beginning of the
Creation. Against the Attempts of these
Scoffers the Apostle arms them through-
out this whole Chapter; assures them
of the Reality of their Hopes, and of
the Truth of the Divine Promises; and
exhorts them to wait with Patience
and Humility for their Accomplish-
ment. *The Lord*, saith he, *is not slack*
Ver. 9. *concerning his Promise (as some Men*
count Slackness) but is Long-suffering
to us-ward, not willing that any should
perish, but that all should come to Re-
pentance.

Where he intimates the True Reason
of *Christ's* delaying his Coming, to be,
that he may give Room and Space to
all

all Men every where to repent, and embrace his Gospel. *Wherefore, beloved,* says he a little afterwards, *account that the Long-suffering of our Lord is Salvation; even as our beloved Brother Paul also, according to the Wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you: As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own Destruction.*

S E R M.
IX.
Ver. 14.
Ec.

He seems purposely to have made mention of St. Paul in this Place, not only because he concurred with him in his Testimony concerning the End and Design of God's Long-sufferance, but because his Writings also had been objected against by those very Scoffers, as *obscure and unintelligible*. And therefore he took an Occasion of mentioning one Passage out of them, that he might have an Opportunity of Vindicating the Whole from these Mens scornful Exceptions. *Account, says he, that the Long-*

SERM. *suffering of the Lord is Salvation; even*

IX. *as our beloved Brother Paul also, according to the Wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. The Place of St. Paul referred to, seems to be that in the Epistle to the Romans, Chap. ii. v. 4. Despisest thou the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering; not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance? From which Parallel Text thus produced from St. Paul, he takes Occasion to speak of All his Writings, and of the Imputation which in general lay upon them. As also in All his Epistles (continues he) speaking in them of these things; in which (i. e.) in which Epistles [I explain it so, notwithstanding a Criticism taken from the Greek, which would make the Words, in which, belong to the Things spoken of in the Epistles, and not to the Epistles themselves, which Criticism I shall not now trouble you with] I say therefore, in which Epistles, are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable (that are Unlearned, i. e. Unskilled,*

Unskilled, and Unversed in Divine things; and *Unstable*, i. e. of Light, desultory, unbalanced Minds) *wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own Destruction.* SERM. IX.

Having thus cleared the Connexion of the Text, I shall discourse on it after the following Manner.

First, By enlarging a little on the Proposition itself, which it contains: That there *are* in St. Paul's Writings, and in the *other* Scriptures also, *Things hard to be understood.* I.

Secondly, By giving some Account how, and for *what* Reason it has come to pass, that the *Scriptures are*, and *must be*, in some measure *Obscure*: How *necessary* and *unavoidable* it was, that there should be *some* Passages in them *dark* and *difficult* even to *Those*, who lived at the Time when they were written, and yet more so to *Us*, who live at this *Distance* from the Age of the Apostles. II.

Q 4

Thirdly,

S E R M.

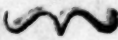
IX.

~ Thirdly, By shewing you, that this carries no Reflection at all in it upon the Divine Goodness or Wisdom. And then in the

IV. Fourth, and last place, By raising some Observations from what has been said, and preventing the Ill Uses that may be made of it.

I. First, This Proposition is evidently laid down in the Text, That there are in St. Paul's Writings, *Things hard to be understood*: And it is plainly intimated, that there are such things in the *Other Parts of Holy Writ* also; inasmuch as they, who *wrest these Difficult Passages of St. Paul*, are said to *wrest the other Scriptures also*.

It is indeed an undoubted Truth, and what no good *Christian* is, I think, in the least concerned to deny, that the Books, both of the Old and New Testament, are not every where equally clear and intelligible. They have,
like

like Other Books, a Mixture of that SERM.
which is Easy, with that which is Hard IX.
to be understood; a Great Deal that is 
Plain and Obvious, and Somewhat also
that is Obscure and Difficult. Notwith-
standing they were designed to contain
a Revelation of God's Will to Men, yet
was not that Revelation designed to par-
take every where alike of the Nature of
its Great Author and Revealer, who is
(in the Phrase of St. John) *Light, and* 1 John i.
in whom there is no Darkneſs at all. 5.

Sometimes the Things spoken of are
ſo Myſterious and Sublime, that our
Limited and Weak Apprehenſions can
hardly reach them. Sometimes the Man-
ner of ſpeaking, even concerning Com-
mon things, is dark and dubious. The
Apocalypſe is received into the Canon,
together with the other Parts of Scrip-
ture; the Senſe of it has been much
ſought and ſearched after by pious and
inquiſitive Men in all Ages of the Church;
and yet we have reaſon to believe, that
it has never yet been thoroughly under-
ſtood by any Man.

The

SERM. The Beginning of St. *John's* Gospel is

IX. so far Intelligible, as that it plainly enough establishes the Divinity of our Lord, and his Co-eternity with God the Father; but yet nobody, I think, will say, that the Sense of every Term in that Chapter is so clear and easy, as that no *Christian*, of whatever Rank or Degree, can, upon perusing, and attentively considering the Whole, miss the Meaning of it.

Even the Discourses of our Blessed Lord are somewhat dark and intricate in some Parts of them. That with *Nicodemus* about Regeneration; and that with the Men of *Capernaum* about Eating his Body and Blood, have in them what will command and exercise our Utmost Attention. And his Account of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, in St. *Matthew*, is so interwoven with that of the Day of Judgment, that it is very difficult to distinguish exactly, what Expressions belong to the One, and what to the Other.

John iii.
John vi.
Matth.
xxiv.

And

And then, as to St. *Paul* in particular, S E R M.
his Doctrines of Justification *by Faith*, IX.
and *not by Works*; of *Election* and Re- Gal. ii.
probation; his Description of the Strug- 16.
gle between *Sin* and *the Law* in the Rom. vii.
Natural Man, as yet unassisted by Grace;
and his Account of the *Spiritual Body*, 1 Cor. xv.
with which we are to rise at the Last
Day, are sufficient Instances of the Truth
of St. *Peter's* Assertion, That in him
particularly *are some Things hard to be*
understood.

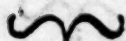
This Truth therefore being supposed,
I proceed now, in the

Second Place, to give some Account, II.
how These obscure Passages came to have
a Place in Scripture: How it could *not*
otherwise be, but that the Holy Writ-
ings *should*, in *some* Parts of them, be
dark and difficult, even to Those, who
lived at the Time when they were writ-
ten, and yet more so to Us, who live at
this Distance from the Age of the Apo-
stles.

And

SERM.

IX.



And the plain Account of this Matter is, that, though the Scripture was written by Men under the Immediate Inspiration and Guidance of the Holy Ghost, yet were those Men, at the Time of this Inspiration, left to the free Use of their own Natural Faculties and Powers; and to express themselves, every one after their particular Fashion and Manner. The Holy Ghost, though it presided over the Minds and Pens of the Apostles, so far as to preserve them from Error, yet doth not seem to have dictated to them, what they were to say, Word by Word, but in that to have left them, in good measure, if not altogether, to themselves. Which appears plainly from hence, in that we find, the Several Writers of the New Testament always in their several Proper and Peculiar Characters; and as different in their Styles, almost, as One Human Author is from another.

For what is left to Men to express, placed only under an Over-ruling Power, which necessitates them to speak nothing

thing but Truth, must needs be expressed, though always Truly, yet, after the unequal, imperfect Manner of Men, sometimes more darkly, and sometimes more clearly. I say therefore, that the Apostles, and Evangelists, making use of their Natural Faculties and Ways of Speech, in committing to Writing the Truths delivered to them, it could not be expected, that they should speak always with the same Degree of Perspicuity, because no other Writer does so.

SERM.
IX.

Further, The Nature of some Things they delivered was such, so high and heavenly, so obscure and altogether unknown to Men, that the Language of Men could not but fail under them, when they were to express them. They were of Necessity sometimes to fall short, in what they said, of what they Imagined and Conceived; and, for want of fit and adequate Terms, to clothe their Thoughts in unequal and improper ones. Particularly as to St. Paul, who had been in the

S E R M. the Third Heaven, and there heard

IX. things unutterable; was it to be expected, that, when he came down from thence, he should have spoke of those Mysteries, after a clear and satisfactory Manner? No, Those, to whom he spake, must have been in the Third Heaven too, thoroughly to have understood his Meaning.

It is no Wonder therefore, that there should be Passages in Scripture of a doubtful and uncertain Meaning, even to *Those*, who lived at the Time *when* that Scripture was penned. It is yet less a Wonder, that there should be many more such with regard to *Us*, who live at this *Distance* from the Age of the Apostles.

For consider we with ourselves, what manner of Men the Apostles were, in their Birth and Education; what Country they lived in; what Language they wrote in; and we shall find it rather Wonderful, that there are so *few*, than that there are so *many* Things, that we are at a Loss to Understand. They were
Men

Men *all* (except St. Paul) meanly born SERM.
and bred, and uninstructed utterly in IX.
the Arts of Speaking and Writing. All
the Language they were Masters of, was,
purely what was Necessary to express
themselves upon the Common Affairs
of Life, and in Matters of Intercourse
with Men of their own Rank and Pro-
fession. When they came therefore to
talk of the Great Doctrines of the Cross,
to preach up the Astonishing Truths of
the Gospel, they brought to be sure their
Old Idiotisms, and Plainness of Speech
along with them. And is it strange
then, that the deep Things of God
should not always be expressed by them
in Words of the greatest Propriety and
Clearness?

The *Eastern* Manner of Thinking
and Speaking, at that time especially,
when the Scripture was wrote, was
widely different from *Ours*, who live in
This Age, and This Quarter of the World.
The Language of the *East* speaks of
nothing simply, but in the boldest, and
most lofty Figures, and in the longest
and

SERM. and most strained Allegories. Its Transitions from One thing to Another are Irregular and Sudden, without the least Notice given. Its Manner of expressing things is wonderfully short and comprehensive, so as to leave much more to be understood, than is plainly and directly spoken. And this also cannot but contribute to make the Holy Writings seem, in some Parts of them, Obscure to such as are used to throw their Thoughts, and their Words into a quite different Mold.

Beyond all this, We, at this Distance, cannot be exactly acquainted with the Occasions, upon which some Parts of Scripture were written; which nevertheless are the true and proper Keys, that open the Meaning of them. We see not the frequent Allusions to Customs then known, and in use. We are in the dark to many of the Objections made to the Apostles Doctrine, which are tacitly obviated and answered by them in their Epistles, without being mentioned. Under these, and many

ny other Disadvantages, the Holy Scri- SERM.
ptures must needs lie, with regard to the IX.
Obviouſneſs of their Senſe and Mean-
ing, to Us at this Diſtance: And it can
be no Blemiſh to them therefore, if that
Meaning be not always obvious.

I might with Truth, add one thing
more upon this Head, That, where the
Interpretation of Scripture has any Dif-
ficulty, that Difficulty is often, in good
meaſure, owing to the prepoſterous En-
deavours uſed by ſome Men to explain
and clear it. The Multiplicity of Com-
ments written upon Scripture, and the
Variety of all the *Poſſible* Senſes of any
Text, ſtarted by thoſe Writers, have
been ſo far from reaching the End aim-
ed at, the Diſſipating all Doubts and
Difficulties, that they have caſt a Miſt
over many Places, which of themſelves
were plain and clear; and have rendered
ſome, that were really a little Obſcure,
yet more unintelligible.

Numberleſs Volumes have been writ-
ten on Scripture, in every Age almoſt,
ſince it was publiſhed; and ſtill the Later

SERM. Writers have generally striven to distinguish themselves from the Elder, by
 IX. some New Guesses, by saying somewhat that hath not been said before. And thus the Mind of an honest Enquirer is perplexed and confounded, and, in the Midst of a Thousand *false* Meanings, easily loses Sight of the *true* one.

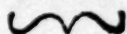
But still it will be said, that these are only *Rational* Accounts, how Scripture comes in *some* Places to be Obscure, not at all *Justifications* of its *being* so. God, who inspired the Apostles to write the Holy Scripture, might, if he had pleased, have suggested to them the very Words also, in which it was to be written; and, by that Means, have made it *All* clear and easy, and took away all Occasion of Doubts, and Disputes concerning it. And since he could have done so, why was it not done, if so be the Scripture were designed for a Rule of Faith and Manners? For can a Rule be too certain? Can a Man know too plainly what he is to Do, and what he is to Believe?

In

In Answer to this therefore, I shall shew, as I propos'd, in the

S E R M.

IX.



Third Place, That it carries no Reflection upon the Divine Goodness, or Wisdom, that the Scripture is not in every Part as plain and clear, as it was possible to have been made.

III.

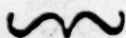
For *First*, The *Goodness* of God is by no means oblig'd to do every thing for us that is *possible* to be done, but only that which is *fitting* and *sufficient*, in order to the *End* it designs. Now the *End* propos'd by God, in causing the Scripture to be written, is, to afford us a Compleat Rule and Measure of whatever is to be believ'd, or done by us. If therefore, in all Points of Faith and Practice, Scripture is *sufficiently* plain and clear, it is *as* plain and clear as it *need* to be; and it can be no Reflection on the Divine *Goodness*, not to have made it plainer.

But now, that whatever is requisite to be believ'd, or done by us, is *sufficiently*

R 2

Evident

SERM. Evident in Scripture, will appear from
IX. these Two Considerations.



1. The Darknes of Scripture in some particular Places does not hinder its being generally plain and clear. Its having some things in it *hard to be understood*, implies, that it has *but* some; and that *most* things in it are easy to be understood, lie open and level to the meanest Understandings. The Truth is, whatever Difficulties there are in Scripture, they are few and little, in comparison of what is plain and intelligible there. Take it altogether, and it well deserves the Character Holy *David* bestows on it. That it is a *Lantern unto his Feet, and a Light unto his Paths: That the Testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth Wisdom unto the Simple: That the Commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth Light unto the Eyes.* And if in general, and for the most part, Scripture be perspicuous and clear, we have Reason to think there is enough of it clear, to instruct us in the *Whole* of our Duty; and make us sufficiently *Wise unto Salvation.* Especially since, in the

Pf. cxix.
105.
Ver. 130.

Pfal. xix.
8.

2^d Place,

2^d Place, Nothing there, that is *hard* SERM.
to be *understood*, is *necessary* to be *under-* IX.
stood by us: And therefore, whatever
Truth is contained in any obscure Place
of Scripture, we may satisfy ourselves,
that the Knowledge, or Practice of it
shall never be required at our Hands,
upon the Account of its being contained
there.

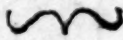
I say, upon the Account of its being
contained there: For a necessary Do-
ctrine, that is delivered obscurely in *one*
Place, may yet be Revealed clearly in
another. And wherever it is clearly
Revealed, we are obliged to take No-
tice of it. But whatever Doctrine is con-
tained in *one* or *more* obscure Texts of
Scripture, and no where else clearly ex-
pressed, is not necessary to be embraced
and believed by us; nor shall we be Con-
demned for not receiving it.

The *Goodness* of God is sufficiently
justified, in proposing the Scripture as a
Rule of Faith to us: For, though it
be not equally perspicuous and clear
throughout, yet it is in the main, and

SERM. for the most part so ; and wherever it is
 IX. hard to be understood, it is on that very
 Account *not necessary* to be understood.
 But,

Secondly, Neither is there any Reflection by this means cast on the *Wisdom* of God. For though it may be said, if these hard Places are not capable of being understood, why were they written? why were they made Parts of the Revelation of God's Will to Men, if we are still as much in the Dark to them, as if they had been never Revealed? yet, to this it may, in the

First place, be answered, that there is no Part of Scripture so obscure, as to be *utterly* unintelligible. St. Peter says only, there are *some things hard*, but he says not, that there are *any impossible* to be Understood. It is difficult indeed in some Places to reach the Sense of the Inspired Writers: But still it is not so difficult, but that it *may* be done, if, with Care and Attention, we study the Holy Scripture; if we free ourselves from Prepossessions and Prejudices; if
 we

we take in all proper Helps, and make S E R M.
 use of all proper Means, and, above XI.
 all, if we ardently beg of God the 
 Assistance of his Good Spirit, to teach,
 and enlighten us, and lead us into all
 Truth. I say, there is no Difficulty *so*
 great in Scripture, but that, by the Su-
 pernatural Illuminations of God's Spi-
 rit, concurring with our Natural En-
 deavours, it is *possible* to be Mastered;
 and therefore God did not Inspire the
 Holy Writers, to write any thing altoge-
 ther in vain, and to no purpose; for
 nothing written by them is perfectly *in-*
capable of being understood; only *some*
 things lie readier to our Sight, upon the
 Surface as it were of the Text, and
others lie deeper, and we are forced
 therefore, (in the Words of Solomon) to
 dig for them, as for hidden Treasures. But, Prov. ii. 4.

Secondly, The *Wisdom* of God is fur-
 ther justified, in leaving these hard Pas-
 sages, inasmuch as there are several *Wise*
Ends, which it serves by it, and several
Weighty Reasons, which it has for so
 doing.

S E R M. He left them on purpose to humble

IX. the Presumption and Pride of Man, to
 19. *Confound the Wisdom of the Wise* of this

1 Cor. i.

World, and to give us an Instance of the mighty Power of God, in making those plain Men, the Apostles, utter such great and sublime Truths, as those of the most improved Understandings among the Heathens, by the mere Light of Nature, never did, nor could do.

He left them on purpose to Create an awful Reverence of Mind in us towards Holy Truths; which, had they been all Easy of Access, would, in a little time, have grown familiar, and cheap to us also.

To secure the Majesty of Religion therefore, he wrapped up some of the great Mysteries of it in Obscurity.—

Pf. xviii.

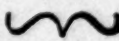
11.

He made (as the Psalmist speaks) *Darkness his Secret Place; his Pavilion round about him with dark Water, and thick Clouds to cover him.*

Further, He left them also, to Exercise our Industry, and to Engage our Attention. He designed the Holy Book

to

to be such, as that we might make it S E R M.
always our Companion and our Study: IX.

That our *Delight* might continually be 
(as *David's* was) *in the Law of the Lord*, Psal. i. 2.

and *in that* we might meditate *Day and Night*. In order to which, it was requisite, that the Sense of Every thing, Every where, should not be too plain, and obvious. For how then could we have found always fresh Matter for our Thoughts and Enquiries? No, the Treasure of Divine Knowledge was necessarily *so* to be hid, in these sacred Volumes, as not soon to be exhausted; so as continually to provoke our Searches, and to feed our Mind with ever fresh Discoveries; so as that, how long soever we meditate upon it, we may have still Room left for further Meditations. Were all plain, were all open there, the Mind would quickly droop, and the Attention languish, upon the repeated Views of that, which it was so well acquainted with, and knew so thoroughly.

Again, God mixed together obscure with plain things, deep with common
Truths

SERM. Truths in Scripture, that what was Addressed to *All* might be Adapted to *Every* one's Capacity. The *Babes in Christ*, as well as *Grown* Saints, the *Weak* promiscuously, and the *Strong*, were to read the Holy Scriptures. And therefore fit it was, that there should be Food in it proportioned to both; *Milk* for the one, and *strong Meat* for the other.

Yet *further*, These Dark Doctrines and Puzzling Passages were inserted, to be the Test of ingenuous, of sincere and well-disposed Minds; to see, whether, when we were once satisfied that a Book came from God, we would acquiesce in every thing contained in it, and submit ourselves (without Disputes or Cavils) as well to those Parts of it which *Shocked*, as to those which Enlightened our Minds; or whether we would not (as many have done) lay hold of every obscure Passage to the Prejudice of Scripture, though we had otherwise never so many Arguments for the Divine Original of it; and Reject the Authority of *all* that which is plain and clear

clear there, for the sake of *something* SERM.
which we do not Comprehend. IX.

Finally, God left these Obscurities in Holy Writ, on purpose to give us a *Taste* and *Glympse*, as it were, of those great and glorious Truths, which shall hereafter fully be discovered to us in another World, but which *now are*, in some measure, *bidden from our Eyes*; on purpose to make us earnestly aspire after, and long for that Blessed State and Time, when all Doubts shall be cleared, and the Veil taken off from all Mysteries: When *the Book*, that is now in some measure *shut*, shall be *opened*, and every one of *the seven Seals thereof loosed*: When *that which is perfect shall come*, and *that which is in Part shall be done away*: When we shall exchange Faith for Sight, Hope for Enjoyment, Reasoning for Intuition, and shall not (as we do now) *see through a Glass darkly*, but *know, even as we are known*. Rev. v. 5:
1 Cor.
xiii. 10.
Ver. 12.

To that blessed State God of his Infinite Mercy bring us all, &c.

SECOND
S E R M O N
O N T H E
Same Subject.

SECOND
SERMON
ON THE
Same Subject.

SECOND

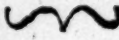
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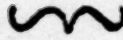
Same Subject.

2 PET. iii. 16.

In which are some things hard to be understood, &c.

IN my former Discourse I shewed S E R M.
you, that these Words of St. Peter X.
relate directly to the Writings of St. Paul; 
in which he owns, *there are some things*
hard to be Understood; and that They,
who were unlearned, and Unstable, wrest-
ed them, as they did the other Scriptures,
to their own Destruction. Whereby he
intimates,

S E R M. intimates, that there are also in the *other*

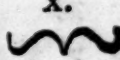
x.  Parts of Scripture, as well as in the Writings of St. Paul, Obscure Passages, liable to be misunderstood, wrested, and perverted by unlearned, and unstable Readers.

I have therefore taken an Occasion from hence, to discourse to you at large concerning the *Difficult* Parts of Holy Writ, so as to take in the *General* Argument; and yet to keep my Eye more particularly all along, upon the Books of the *New Testament*, to which St. Peter's Words chiefly refer.

I proposed to treat of this Subject under the *Four* following Heads.

I. *First*, By enlarging a little on the Proposition allowed and laid down in the Text, That there are in St. Paul's Writings, and in the *other* Scriptures also, *Things hard to be understood*.

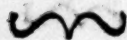
II. *Secondly*, By giving some Account *how*, and for *what* Reason it hath come to pass, that the *Scriptures are*, and *must*

must be, in some measure, *Obscure*: S E R M.
How *necessary* and *unavoidable* it was, ^{X.}
that there should be *some* Passages in 
them *dark* and *difficult*, even to *Those*,
who lived at the Time *when* they were
written, and yet more so to *Us*, who
live at this *Distance* from the Age of the
Apostles.

Thirdly, By shewing you, that this III.
carries in it no Reflection, either upon
the *Goodness*, or *Wisdom* of God: Not
on his *Goodness*; because though he has
left *some things* in Holy Writ *hard to*
be understood, yet he has left *enough* there
easy and *plain*; enough to inform us
clearly of the whole Compass of what
we are *bound* to believe, and to practise:
Not on his *Wisdom*; because these *dark*
Parts of Holy Writ have their Uses, as
well as the *clear* ones; there being ma-
ny *Wise Ends*, and *Weighty Reasons* for
inserting them; several of which I reck-
oned up to you in my last Discourse.

SERM.

X.

 *Fourthly*, and *lastly*, I was to raise some Observations from what hath been said; to prevent the *wrong* Uses that *might*, and to point out the *true* and *only* Use that *ought* to be made of it.

The *Two first* of these Heads have been fully spoken to. The *Third* has been entered upon, and in some measure cleared; and what remains behind of it, will fall into the *Fourth* and *Last* General Head, the Enlarging on which shall be the Business of this *present* Discourse.

And the First thing I shall observe, from what has been said on this Subject, shall be, The Folly and Unreasonableness of those Men, who endeavour, from the Obscurity of *some* Parts of Scripture, *entirely* to destroy the *Authority* of it.

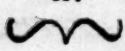
For

For thus they argue: The Bible, say S E R M.
they, is a Book ordered by God to be X.
written for the Information of Man-
kind, in what they are to Believe and
to Do. And can we think, that such a
Book, from such an Author, should
have any Defects in it? Can it be ima-
gined, that God would speak to Man,
and yet not speak so as in every Case to
be understood by him? Is he either not
able, or not willing to express himself
clearly? If neither of these can be sup-
posed without Blasphemy, how comes
it to pass that this Volume is so full of
Difficulties and Mysteries? that this
Revelation of his Will wants a yet fur-
ther Revelation, to give us a plain Ac-
count of its Meaning?

Thus do the *Ungodly Reason with them-* Wisd. ii.
selves, but not aright; as will appear from ^{1.}
these following Considerations.

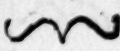
It is a strange sort of Argument,
surely, that a Book, which comes from
God, must have nothing in it *Obscure*,
and *Hard to be Understood*. On the
contrary, I think, it were much to be

S E R M. suspected, that *such* a Book as this was

x. *not* of Divine Authority, if it *should* be


found to lie ready and open to the most ordinary Apprehensions, in *Every* Part and Passage of it. It is given to us, on purpose to open to us some Discoveries concerning the Divine Nature, its Essence, and ineffable Perfections; to inform us of mysterious Truths, the Secrets of Heaven, hid from Natural Reason, and from former Ages. And can a Book, do we think, that speaks of these Deep Things of God, with which the Natural Man is utterly unacquainted, speak so, as not to give us the least Trouble in understanding

1 Cor. ii. 9. it? Can that, like which *our Eyes never saw, nor our Ears heard, nor hath it entered into the Heart* to conceive any thing before, be told us in Words as easy to be apprehended, as those, by which we express the most Common things, that we every Day converse with? It is not so when we first set ourselves to learn any Human Art or Science. The Terms, the Principles, the

the Propositions of it are all at first S E R M.
Sight strange and uncouth, and make X.
no bright Impression upon the Mind. 
They Amaze, they Puzzle, but they
do not Enlighten us; till by repeated
Views, we have made them familiar and
easy to us. And why then should we
expect, that Divine Mysteries, and the
Things of another World should more
easily be taught and learnt, than Human
Arts and Sciences? The Obscurity of
the Subject, whatever it be, must needs
cause a proportionable Obscurity in the
Expression of it; and no Wonder then,
if Scripture be dark in some Places,
where it speaks of things so remote
from Human Knowledge and Appre-
hension.

Dark it must needs be, unless God,
who miraculously enlightened the Minds
of the Prophets and Apostles, when
they were to write it, should miracu-
lously also open the Understanding of
every one that comes to read it. So
that the Difficulties occurring in some
Passages of a Divine Revelation, are so

S 3far

S E R M. far from being an Argument against its
 X. coming from God, that on the contrary,
 it were not reasonable to think it to be
 a Divine Revelation, if there were *no-
 thing* Abstruse and Difficult in it.

Should it be further objected, that the Design of Scripture is, to Reveal God's Nature and Will to Mankind, to be a sure Guide, and an easy Rule of our Belief and Practice; and it ought therefore, in order to the Attainment of this End, to be in every respect plain and clear; for to no purpose would it be given us by God as a Guide and a Rule, if it be Obscurely and Doubtfully expressed:

To this the Answer is ready: That the Scripture, being intended by God, as a Rule of Faith and Manners, must needs be, and certainly is, *so far* clear, as to reach the *End* it is intended for; so far, as to enlighten our Minds in all necessary saving Truths, and to afford us in plain intelligible Terms all that Knowledge, that is requisite to carry us to Heaven. And *thus* far we affirm the
 Scripture

Scripture to be clear and easy. But it S E R M.
 follows not, that it ought, on this Ac- X.
 count, to be plain and clear in every Part 
 and Passage of it. If there be enough in
 it easy to be apprehended, it sufficiently
 answers the End, for which it was de-
 signed, though there be some things in
 it, which are *not* so. And therefore
 the Objection fails in this, That it sup-
 poses Scripture to be written perfectly
 for *this* End, and for *no* Other, the af-
 fording us an easy, familiar Rule of Faith
 and Manners. This indeed was the
chief, but it was not the *only* End, pro-
 posed in writing it.

Besides this, it was intended (as you
 have heard) *so* to be written, as to hum-
 ble the Pride of Men, and confound *the*
Wisdom of the Wise: so as to try our
 Probity, and to exercise our strictest
 Attention, and to employ our Industry;
 so as to create a Reverence and Awe in
 us of the Divine Revealer; and to give
 us an Instance of the mighty Power of
 God, in making those plain Men, the
 Apostles, utter such great and sublime

SERM. Truths, as those of the most improved

x. Understandings among the Heathen, by
 the mere Light of Nature, never did,
 nor could do. In a word, so as to give
 us a light Taste and Glympse only of
 those Truths, that were fully to be Re-
 vealed to us in another World; and,
 by that Means, to make us the more
 earnestly reach out our Thoughts to, a-
 spire after, and long for the future and
 full Enjoyment of them. And, in or-
 der to attain these Ends, it was fit and
 requisite, that *some* Parts of it should be
 involved in Obscurity; as I discoursed
 to you the last Opportunity. And
 therefore it must not be argued, that
 the written Word of God, being de-
 signed for a Rule of Faith and Action,
 must be perspicuous *throughout*; because
 there were *Other* Ends besides this, *to*
which some Parts of it were designed;
 and to the attaining which, the Dark
 and Difficult Places in Holy Writ con-
 tribute as much, as the plain and most
 intelligible Passages do, towards build-
 ing

ing us up in those Doctrines that are necessary to Salvation. SERM.
X.

But then it is further Objected, That this Way of accounting for the Obscurity of Holy Writ in *some* things, supposeth it to be Evident in *all* things necessary to Salvation: A Supposition which will not easily be granted by those we have to deal with. For, say they, are not the Doctrines of the Divinity of *Christ*, and the Holy Ghost, and those of the same Rank with these, necessary to Salvation? And yet they are not plainly and clearly contained in Scripture; for then reasonable Men, upon reading Scripture, could not have *doubted*, whether they were contained there, or not; much less in good Earnest *believed*, that they were not contained there.

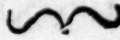
Now the true Account of this Matter is this.

First, It is not pretended, that these Doctrines are plainly contained in *every* Text of Scripture, which speaks of them; but only that in *some one* Text

SERM. or *more* they are proposed to us convincingly, and clearly; and if a Truth be *once* delivered so clearly, as to leave no Doubt, 'tis the same thing to us, who acknowledge the Divine Authority of all Parts of Scripture, as if it were *many* times there repeated. For Example, were there *no* other Text for the Proof of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in the Sense, in which the Church of God hath always professed to believe it, but *that* only where our Saviour commands his Disciples to *Baptize in the*

Matth. xxviii. 19. *Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:* Or that, where St. John i Joh. v. 7. speaks of the *Three Witnesses in Heaven;* either of these Texts would be sufficient to make that Doctrine an *Evident* Part of Scripture, though in all the *other* Passages usually produced for it, it should be allowed to be expressed obscurely.

Again, neither is it pretended, that these Doctrines are any where, throughout the whole Bible, expressed with the *utmost* Degree of Evidence and Clearness, which Words are any ways possibly

sibly capable of: But only that they are S E R M.
so expressed, that an honest impartial X.
 Mind cannot *well* miss the Sense of them. 

It might have been said indeed, in so many Words, that *Christ*, and the Holy Spirit were, from all Eternity, distinct from the Father, and, together with him, one God blessed for Ever; and equally the Objects of our Religious Worship and Service. But though this be not said there in so many Terms, it is said however in such, as an unbyassed well-meaning Man cannot mistake; and he that is not so, though it should have been said in these very Terms, would perhaps have found a Way to have mistaken, or rather wilfully to have perverted the Sense of them.

The Truth is, God never designed to give us an Account of the Mysteries of Christianity in Expressions every way so bright and clear, as should prevent all possible Wrestings and Misconstructions. For this had been to do too great Force to our Assent, which ought to be free and voluntary. This had been to rob
 us

SERM. us of the Rewards due to Believing, and
X. to take away the proper Test and Tryal
of Sincere and Ingenuous Minds.

Besides, had all Points of Doctrine been delivered with such a Degree of Exactness, been so minutely explained, so strictly and cautiously guarded on all Sides, as to shut out the Possibility of any mistaken Meaning, the Bible had been too Voluminous, and too subtle a Book for common Use. And though to some few distinguishing Heads, it might have given better Satisfaction, yet to the most, that is, to the Unlettered part of Mankind, it would have been ten times more Obscure, and Unintelligible, than even now it is represented to be. So that upon the whole, it was extremely fit and proper, that these Doctrines should be delivered with that Degree of Clearness, as to be *easily* understood; not so, as to be perfectly *incapable* of being misunderstood. It was requisite, that they should be asserted shortly and plainly, not that they should be fenced about with all those nice Distinctions, which

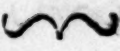
which could any way guard them from S E R M.
the Attempts of the most Captious and X.
Unreasonable. 

And with *this* Degree of Clearness we affirm, that all *necessary* Truths are delivered in Scripture, *i. e.* with *such* a Degree of Clearness, as is *necessary*. Nor does it weaken the Strength of this Assertion to say, that the Sense of those Passages in Scripture, which We think plain to this Purpose, is disputed by some, and absolutely denied by others; and therefore is not so plain as we imagine. For at this rate, there would, perhaps, be never a plain Text left in the whole Book of God. Since what Text almost is there, that has not been the Subject of different Interpretations and Opinions?

There is scarce any thing so absurd, says an Ancient, in *Nature* or *Morality*, but some Philosopher or other has held it. And there is scarce any thing so extravagant in *Divinity* (may we say) but that some obstinate, opinionative Man or other has maintained it, and made a
wretched

S E R M. wretched Shift to countenance his Opinion by the Authority of Scripture, miserably wrested and perverted to his Purpose. But what then? This makes no more against the Perspicuity of the Holy Writings, in all necessary Doctrines, than the Wild Opinion of that Old Philosopher, who affirmed Snow to be black, disproves the Clearness and Certainty of those Informations, which proceed from the Senses.

Let not a Man therefore say, that the Scripture is *not* plain in those things, in which we pretend it *is*, because in those very things the Church of God hath Understood it one way, and *Arius*, *Socinus*, or some such Broacher of Heresy, another. For this proves nothing, but that there have been Men hardy enough to deny somewhat, which all the World before them allowed: but it is by no means an Argument of the Obscurity of Scripture Expression, unless we could know certainly, that these Men were honest and upright in their Searches, acted with no By-designs, had no Vain End, which

which they proposed to themselves, of S E R M.
 heading a Party, or baffling received O- X.
 pinions; came to search these Books 
 without Biass, Prejudice, or any Preen-
 engagements to some Opinions of their
 own, which they were willing and re-
 solved to find there. Without all this,
 and a great deal more be proved (which
 indeed is not capable of Proof) the
 Scriptures may be clear, though Men of
 clear Reason in other things do not, or
 will not understand them.

Well then, the Obscurity of Scri-
 pture carries no Objection at all in it, ei-
 ther against the *Goodness*, or *Wisdom* of
 God; for in all things *necessary* to be un-
 derstood, it *is* obvious and plain; and in
 what is *unnecessary* to be understood,
 there are many good and wise Reasons,
 why it should *not* be plain. In the
 mean time, let Those, who reject
 Scripture, be pleased to find us out a
 System of Religion delivered by God,
 without any of these Difficulties in it.
 We desire no more of them, but to leave
 us in Possession of our Bibles, till they
 can

SERM. can shew us a clearer Revelation, and
 X. more worthy of the Divine Revealer.



If to this they shall say (as many in our Own Times do say) What need of any Revelation at all? *Reason* is clear, and by *that* we may guide Ourselves; God has implanted a *Light* in every one, *sufficient* to shew him the Way to Heaven: We must ask them, Whether *Natural Religion* speaks so plainly in any *one* Point of Religion, but that *some* perverse Man or other has contradicted it? And then, by their own Rule concerning the Obscurity of Scripture, *that* Point is not plain from Reason, because Rational Thinking Men have denied its Plainness; so that a Man, who, on the Account of the Obscurity of Holy Writ, shall pretend to reject the *Christian Religion*, and turn *Deist*, must, upon the same Account, reject *Deism* too, and turn *Atheist*. For there are a great many Things in the Notion of a God, and of that Worship, which *Natural Religion* directs us to pay him, that he can never satisfy himself about, nor thoroughly understand.

understand. Nay, he must not stay at S E R M.
Atheism neither, for the very same Reason; since no System of *that* kind can X.
 be contrived, which is not in many Parts of it obscure, and unintelligible. A great Instance of which we have in the Writings of that Modern *Atheist*, *SPINOSA*. In a word, he must *be* nothing, *believe* nothing, be of *no* Opinion, but live under an *Indifference* to all Truths and Falshoods, in a pendulous State of Mind; *necessitated* to act continually in order to some End *supposed* to be true, and yet *doubting*, whether there be any such thing as *Truth*, or no; living under all the Agonies and Torments of a Rooted Scepticism.

Thus have I *considered largely*, and in some measure endeavoured to remove the *First* Ill Use that is made of the Doctrine of the Text, by those Perverse and Unreasonable Men, who take an Advantage from the Confessed Obscurity of some Parts of Scripture, to dispute the Authority of it.

S E R M. I now hasten to mention some *Other*
 x. Ill Uses that are made of what is own-
 ed here in the Text, that there are in the
 Inspired Writings *Things hard to be un-*
derstood.

And indeed, after what has been already discoursed; I need do little more than mention them; for to represent them, will be to disprove them.

Secondly, therefore, I observe, That it follows not from thence, as the *Romanists* would inferr, that, because of these *Obscure Passages* in Scripture, there is absolute Need of a Supreme Judge in Controversies, who should determine the Sense of every Text, and, among many *false* Meanings of it, infallibly guide us into the only *true* one. I say, it by no means follows from hence, that such a Judge is necessary, for this plain Reason: Because, as we have heard, none of those Points, that are any ways obscure and doubtful, are necessary to be determined. In these every Man may abound in his own Sense, and have his own Opinions to himself;
 and

and if he does but maintain those Opinions with Sobriety and Modesty, without rending the Unity, or disturbing the Peace of the Church, though he may be under an Error, yet that Error shall not be rigorously imputed to him. S E R M.
X.

Much less does it follow from hence,

Thirdly, That because of These Obscurities in Scripture, therefore the Book itself should be taken out of the Peoples Hands. For though there are *some* Things in it *hard* to be Understood, yet *many*, nay *most* Things there are *easy* to be understood, as that very Expression in *St. Peter* intimates. And how unreasonable therefore is it, to make *some* dark Passages in Holy Writ a Pretence of Locking up *all* at once, without Distinction, from the Generality of *Christians*; because there are a *few* things there, which they cannot understand, therefore to let them understand *nothing* at all. And this is so much the harder, because (as we have heard) all that is necessary to be understood, is evidently contained in Scripture. So that

S E R M. to deprive a Man of that which he *can*
 x. understand, and which also it is necessary he *should* understand, for the sake
 ~~~~~ of somewhat contained in the same Book, which he *cannot* understand, and which it is no matter whether he *doth* understand or no, is an unreasonable Piece of Cruelty.

I will be bold to say, that, upon the same Grounds that the *Roman* Church denies the People the Liberty of Reading Scripture, she might have debarred them also of the Privilege of our Saviour's Conversation, while he lived upon Earth. For there were *several Things*, in the Course of his Instructions, *hard to be understood*; and therefore for fear of misinterpreting those Things, it was convenient, might she have said, that all Ignorant, Unskilful Men should utterly abstain from his Company. But our Saviour did not deter the *Common* People from approaching him, because now and then he spake a *dark* Parable. And therefore neither ought they to be withheld from reading his Gospel, though there

there be some hard things there, which perhaps they will read without understanding.

S E R M.  
X.  


But *Fourthly*, and *lastly*, These Ill Uses of the Doctrine of the Text being removed, the Truest, and most Proper Use we can make of it, is, from a Sense of these *things hard to be understood* in Scripture, to form ourselves into a deep Humility, and Lowliness of Mind, in the perusing them; to read that Sacred Volume, with a Wise Jealousy, and a Wary Distrust of our own selves; not with a Conceited Opinion of our own Gifts and Parts, as if we alone were able to fathom all Depths, and to grasp all Mysteries. Except ye receive my Gospel as a little Child, said our Saviour, *Ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* And except ye read my Gospel, as a little Child, may he be as well supposed to say, with such an humble, and teachable Temper, with such a Freedom from Vanity, Prepossession, and Prejudices, as belongs to that Infant State, ye cannot enter in-

Mark. x.

<sup>15.</sup>



SERM. to the deep things of it; those things  
 X. which are expressly said to be *revealed*  
 to *Babes*, but *hidden from the Wise*.

Mat. xi.

25.

Let us therefore weigh and consider what we read as well as we can; but let us not too much indulge our private Reasonings upon, and fanciful Expositions of Scripture. When we stick any where, let us modestly consult those who should know better than we, and whose particular Business it is to understand and explain this sacred Volume. Let us enquire what has been the Interpretation generally received in the Church of *Christ* in the Purest Ages of it. Or, if that be hard to come at, what is the Opinion of our *own* Church, that particular Member of the Mystical Body of *Christ*, into which it has pleased the Divine Providence to engraft us. When we have found it, let us resolve not lightly to vary from it; not without strong Reasons, and clear Convictions to the contrary; and even then to do it with Modesty, and be content to enjoy our own Private Opinions, without

without endeavouring to make Prose- S.E.R.M.  
lytes, or troubling the Peace of the X.  
Church, for the sake of them. Let us  
pay a due Deference, though not a blind  
Obedience, to so great an Authority.  
And let us not reverence Her *Decisions*  
only, but make use of Her Admirable  
*Words* also, which She puts into the  
Mouth of every One, who desires to  
grow in the Knowledge of Scripture.

*Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy  
Scripture to be written for our Learning,  
Grant, that we may in such wise hear  
them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly  
digest them, that by Patience and Comfort  
of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and  
ever hold fast, the blessed Hope of Ever-  
lasting Life, which thou hast given us  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*



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THIRD  
S E R M O N  
ON THE  
Same Subject.

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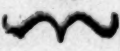
2 PET. iii. 16.

*Which they that are Unlearned, and Un-  
stable, wrest, as they do also the other  
Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.*

FROM the former Part of the Verse S E R M.  
**F** I have already taken Occasion to XI.  
Discourse to you largely concerning the  
Obscurity of Holy Writ. In the latter  
Part of it, which I have proposed now  
to handle, St. *Peter* gives us an Account  
of the Ill Impressions that these Difficult  
Parts

S E R M. Parts of Scripture make often on the  
 XI. Minds of *Weak Christians*; they are  
 wrested by them (he tells us) *to their own  
 Destruction.*

By *Unlearned Men*, the Apostle means not such as wanted that which we commonly call *Learning*, but such as were not well skilled in *Divine Things*. By *Unstable*, such as, not being well grounded in the Faith, were, upon that Account, easy to be drawn aside into pernicious Opinions and Destructive Errors. Such, he says, as These, *wrest*, i. e. misunderstand, misapply, and pervert the Writings of St. *Paul*, and the other Scriptures: And This They do, *to their own Destruction*: That is, to their Eternal Ruin in another World. So that the Meaning of this whole Passage is, That some Men, not being firmly rooted and grounded in the true Faith of *Christ*, and being by Consequence of an Uncertain and Wavering Judgment in Matters of Religion, were apt to make an Ill Use of the Difficult Places of Scripture, and to turn them to such a  
 Sense

Sense as destroyed Christianity; and such SER M.  
therefore as could not but end in the De- XI.  
struction of Those who asserted and main-   
tained it.

This at first Sight perhaps may seem an *hard Saying*. What! will some Men say, shall a Man be ruined Eternally for a misunderstood Place of Scripture? Shall They who own the Divine Authority of Holy Writ (as 'tis plain these Persons did) and who are studious to know, and embrace the true Sense of it every where, if in some Obscure Passages they should mistake it, be answerable for that Mistake, at the Hazard of their Salvation?

Better, at this rate, had it been, that the Bible should never have been given Men, if it be so very fatal a thing to make a Wrong Exposition, even of the most Doubtful and Intricate Parts of it.

I shall endeavour to give an Answer to this Complaint, by stating the Just Bounds, and shewing the Great Reasonableness of St. *Peter's* Assertion; and shall then make use of the Truth of the  
Text,



SERM. Text, thus *Explained* and *Justified*, in  
 XI. some *Observations* and *Inferences* that it  
 will afford us.

In order to state the Bounds of the Assertion, it will be fit to consider, more particularly,

I. *First*, What is strictly to be *Understood* here by *Wresting* of Scripture.

II. *Secondly*, What *kind* of Passages in Scripture they were, that are said to have been thus *wrested*.

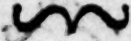
I. As to the *First* of these, it must be considered, That, to *Wrest* Scripture, doth in Strictness of Speech signify, not only to misinterpret, and misunderstand it, out of Weakness and Ignorance, as any *Christian* may blamelessly do, but with some Degree of Perversity and Wilfulness to force an Unnatural and false Construction upon it, in order to make it fall in with our Corrupt Opinions and Prejudices, which we have before-hand entertained, and resolved not  
 to

to part with. Thus much is intimated SERM.  
 by the Original Word *ερεβλῆν*, which fig- XI.  
 nifies, either to detort or turn away, or   
 to torment, and put to the Question. In  
 the *First* of these Senses, when applied  
 to Scripture, it implies, that these  
*Wresters* of it Bent and Warped the  
 streight Line and Measure of their Du-  
 ty, on purpose to make it suit with their  
 own Crooked Opinions. In the *Second*,  
 (which comes to much the same) that  
 They did as it were Torment and Vex it,  
 till it spake according to their Minds.

*Secondly*, We are to observe, what *kind* II.  
 of Passages in Scripture they were, which  
 these Men are said to have *Wrested*. They  
 were such as were *hard to be understood* (so  
 the preceding Words speak) and such as,  
 for that very reason, there was no Necessi-  
 ty that they *should* Understand, and yet  
 these Men would pretend to Understand  
 them, and to be very positive also, and per-  
 emptory in their Opinions concerning  
 them. Further it appears, that these Places  
 treated not of slight Indifferent Points of  
 Doctrine,

SERM. Doctrine, but of such as were of the

XI. utmost Concern and Moment; such as



were the Foundations of the *Christian* Faith, and the very Pillars that support-

ed the whole Frame of Religion. I

say, it appears, that they treated of such

Points as these, from the foregoing Parts

of this Chapter, where *St. Peter* dis-

courses of the Day of Judgment, of

its Certainty, and of the Wise Reasons

for which God was pleased to delay it;

and represents some Men as *Scoffing* at

Ver. 4.

these Doctrines, and saying, *Where is*

*the Promise of his Coming? For since the*

*Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as*

*they were.* To convince these Scoffers

he urges the Authority of *St. Paul* to

them; who in his Epistles had maintain-

ed the same Assertions, not always how-

ever expressed with such a Degree of

Evidence and Clearness, as might be

thought necessary to prevent all Mistakes;

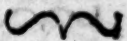
from whence Ill Men had taken an Oc-

casion to abuse his Words to a quite dif-

ferent Sense, and to pervert his Mean-

ing. So that the Points of Doctrine, to

which

which these Wrested Texts referred, SERM.  
were Great and Fundamental ones; and XI.  
which it was of the last Importance to   
be rightly Instructed in. And to this  
we may add also a

*Third Remark,* That this forced Interpretation of Obscure Passages was in Opposition to other Plain and Evident Texts. For since (as I have already Discoursed to you) there is no Point of Moment, but what is some where or other plainly and perspicuously delivered in Scripture, and since these Wrested Places of Scripture, which St. *Peter* speaks of, related, as you have heard, to Points of Moment; it follows, that they who Wrested them, did it in Contradiction to other Plain and Perspicuous Parts of Holy Writ.

The full Import of the Text therefore, under these several Explications, will be, that They who, being misled by Pride, and Vanity, or any other Lust and Passion, perverted the Sense of Scripture, in order to make it suit with their own wicked Practices, or justify



SERM. their ill Opinions; who Vexed and Tor-

XI. tured Texts, in order to make them

~ speak such Language as was for their Purpose; who did this in Passages very *hard to be understood*, and therefore not *necessary* to be understood, and in Points of Doctrine which were of the utmost Concern and Importance, and Interpreted these Passages, in relation to these Points, quite contrary to other plain and express Places of Scripture; these Men, I say, are very justly and reasonably said, *to have wrested the Scriptures to their own Destruction*. For surely there was such a Complication of Insincerity, Pride, and Obstinacy in this *Manner* of Wrestling Scripture, as deserved such a Condemnation.

And therefore to that Question, Shall a Man be Eternally ruined for a misunderstood Place of Scripture? We answer, Yes doubtless, under those Circumstances which we have before Explained, if it be a *Fundamental* Point, about which he is mistaken, and be much his *own Fault*, that he is mistaken,

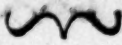
III A mis-

A misunderstood Place of Scripture SERM.  
 may overthrow One of the Prime Arti- XI.  
 cles of Faith, which God has made ne-  
 cessary to be believed in order to Salva-  
 tion: Or it may destroy the Morality of  
 the Gospel, by introducing a Loose Opi-  
 nion concerning Life and Manners. By  
 wresting *One* single Passage of Holy  
 Writ, a Man may either *deny the Lord* <sup>2</sup> Pet. ii. 1.  
*who bought him,* or *turn the Grace of* Jude 4.  
*God into Lasciviousness.* And he that  
 does either of these, cannot be said to be  
 severely dealt with, though he be cut  
 off from the Mercies of the Gospel.  
 For a Life led in Opposition to the Plain  
*Practical* Rules of Christianity, or with-  
 out that *Faith*, which Christianity re-  
 quires, are *either* of them a sufficient  
*Cause* of our Condemnation. And  
 therefore such a Wilful Wreſting of Scrip-  
 ture, as occasions either of these, must  
 in its Consequence be Damnable, and  
 excuse God in pronouncing this Sen-  
 tence, from all manner of Severity or  
 Rigour in his Dealings with us. This  
 is the Account of the true Meaning of

SERM. St. Peter's Assertion in the Text, and of  
 XI. the Justness also, and Reasonableness of  
 it. Which Points being thus Stated and  
 Cleared, I come now, as I proposed, to  
 make use of them, in some *Observations*  
 and *Inferences* that they afford us. And

*First*, It may be Observed, that the  
 Scriptures were perverted, and turned  
 by Ill Men to Ill Purposes, in the *Times*  
 of the Apostles themselves; that they  
 were no *sooner* Written, but they were  
*Wrested*. From whence we may learn  
 these Two Things.

1<sup>st</sup>, That if this happened in the *Apo-*  
*stles* Days, then well might it happen in  
*After-times*; especially in *this* Age, which  
 is at so great a Distance from the Time  
 of the Apostles writing. We may cease  
 to wonder, how it has come to pass,  
 that so many Controversies have been  
 started about the Sense of Scripture, that  
 it has been urged to so many Wrong and  
 Different Purposes, and brought to sup-  
 port and countenance so many Heretical  
 Opinions in *Latter* Days, when we find  
 that during the *Lives* of St. Paul and St.  
 Peter themselves, it was thus insincerely  
 and

and unfairly dealt with. The Ink was SERM.  
hardly dry, which fell from the Apostles XI.  
Pens, but Men began to dispute about   
the Words that were wrote in it; to  
misconstrue, and misapply them, every  
one to such Doctrines as pleased him  
best; and to draw from the Inspired  
Writings things destructive of Faith and  
Salvation, in the Face of the Inspired  
Authors of them, without asking, or  
at least, without taking their Opinions  
in the Point; who surely had been the  
properest Men to have given an Account  
of their own Meaning. And if these  
things were so *then*, what Wonder is it,  
if ever *since*, and especially *now*, in  
these Dregs of Time, there be Wilful  
Men found, who will oppose their own  
Vain Fancies and Novelties to the Gene-  
ral Sense of the whole Body of *Christi-*  
*ans*, and not submit themselves to such  
a Concurrent Testimony in the Exposi-  
tion of Scripture, as though of the Ut-  
most Moment towards determining our  
Assent, yet falls far short of Infallibility  
and Inspiration.



SERM. From the same Observation also we  
XI. may learn, in the

2<sup>d</sup> Place, That an Unerring Expounder of Scripture is not so Useful and Necessary, as some Men would make us believe it is; because if there were such an One, and he were known and acknowledged to be such by all Men, yet would not that secure all Men from misinterpreting Scripture, as is plain from the Instance of the Text. The Apostles were certainly Unexceptionable Interpreters of their Own Writings, and Infallible Judges of all Controversies that could arise from them; and yet notwithstanding this, their Writings were in their own Time perverted, to countenance Erroneous and Heretical Doctrines; and so doubtless would they be now, though there were an Infallible Judge upon Earth still. And Vain therefore is the Pretence of our Adversaries of the Church of *Rome*, that such an Infallible Judge is necessary, to assure us of the True Sense of Scripture, and put an End to all Controversies concerning

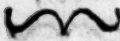
cerning it; since plain it is, that, when S E R M.  
there was such an Infallible Judge, he XI.  
did not put an End to all Controversies  
of this Kind: There were still a great  
many Proud, Pertinacious, and Opini-  
onative Men left, that would not be con-  
cluded by him.

Now if the Inferring the Necessity of  
God's acting in such, or such a Manner,  
from the Convenience that would re-  
dound to Mankind from his so acting,  
be no very good Argument in Divinity,  
even when that Convenience is allowed;  
what a Kind of Argument must that be,  
which would prove the Necessity of an  
Infallible Judge, from the great Expedi-  
ence of it towards Determining all  
Controversies, when even that Expedi-  
ence itself (as we have seen) wants to  
be proved?

But to go on. We may observe from  
St. Peter's Assertion in the Text,

*Secondly*, What Temper of Mind, what  
Precautions, what Degree of Know-  
ledge are requisite, in order to make  
our Enquiries into the Obscure Parts of

S E R M. Scripture Innocent and Useful to us.

XI.  It is plain that this is an Attempt of some Hazard, and that it may happen to cost us dear, as it did those in the Text, if we do not fitly prepare and guard our Minds against the Danger of it. Which may be done, if we manage our Searches of this Kind by these following Rules and Directions.

1<sup>st</sup> We must take care that the End we propose to ourselves in these Enquiries be Good and Laudable. They must not be Entered upon out of meer Curiosity and Wantonness, not out of a vain and fruitless Desire of Knowledge, nor out of a Design of being more Skilful and Learned than other Men, and of appearing to understand every thing; but the End of all our Searches in this Case ought to be, that we may improve in the Skill of those Divine Truths, which were on purpose committed to Writing, that there might be Matter in Holy Writ, fit always to employ our repeated Meditations, and to exercise our strictest Attention; That we may by  
such

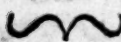
such Searches gain to ourselves higher S E R M.  
and more enlarged Apprehensions of XI.  
God, a truer and clearer Sense of the  
deep Wisdom of all his Mysterious Dis-  
pensations; and may thus raise up our  
Minds into greater Degrees of holy Ad-  
miration, Reverence, and Awe.

We must intend to Qualify ourselves  
by these Searches for the removing the  
Objections raised by those, who are no  
Friends to Scripture, for the Justifying  
the darkest, as well as the brightest Parts  
of it, and making out to fair unpreju-  
diced Men the beautiful Harmony of all  
the different, but agreeing Branches of  
the Divine Revelation,

2<sup>dly</sup>, We must come to this Work, as  
with a right Intention, so with a Mind  
rightly disposed and qualified to pursue  
that Intention; not presuming on our  
own Strength; not with an high Opinion  
and Conceit of our particular Gifts,  
Abilities, or Advantages, as if we alone  
were able to clear up all Difficulties,  
and to go to the Bottom of all Myste-  
ries, and that nothing were too hard for  
us,

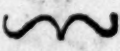


SERM. us. This is not a Temper of Mind, ei-

XI. ther naturally fitted for such a Work, or which God delights to bless with supernatural Assistances and Discoveries. No, if ever we hope to make our Enquiries of this Kind successful and profitable to us, we must be sure to conduct them with great Modesty, with a becoming Diffidence and Distrust of ourselves, humbly and chiefly relying upon God for his Gracious Help and Assistance; and in order to it, putting up frequent and fervent Petitions to that good Spirit, which Indited the Holy Scriptures, that he would please to enlighten us with the Knowledge of all the deep Mysteries contained there. 'Tis Humility and Devotion that principally qualify us for such Searches as these; and will do more by themselves towards giving a Man a true understanding of Scripture, than all the Gifts and Parts in the World will do, when separated from them. For it is true in this Instance, as well as in many others, That *God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Lowly.*

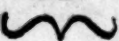
James iv.  
6.

And

And as a good Way to keep alive and S E R M.  
improve this Humility of Mind in us, XI.  
let us be sure, 

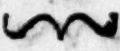
3<sup>dly</sup>, In our Searches of this Kind, e-  
ver to carry this Truth along with us (a  
Truth I have largely explained, and  
proved to you in a former Discourse)  
that there is no Place of Holy Writ *hard*  
to be Understood, that is *needful* to be  
understood by us. If we maintain this  
Reflection constantly upon our Minds,  
it will teach us not to lay too great  
Stress upon these Difficulties, nor to  
employ too much of our Time upon  
them, so as to be in the least taken off  
from considering what is more plain and  
profitable in Scripture, what can more  
easily and usefully be understood, and is  
indeed more necessary to be understood  
by us. Some Men pore so much, and so  
long upon Passages of a disputed Mean-  
ing, as if they thought it indispensably  
requisite to determine themselves of one  
Side or other of the Question; as if the  
Whole of Religion were concerned in  
such difficult Enquiries; they are so bu-  
sy in opening and explaining *hard* Places,  
that

SERM. that they forget to meditate upon *plain*

XI.  ones, and to govern their Lives under a lively and vigorous Sense of the Doctrines contained in them: Which is doing

Luke xi.  
42.

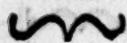
just as the *Pharisees* did, *Tything Mint and Rue, and all manner of Herbs, and passing over Judgment and the Love of God.* Whereas (as our Saviour in that Case decides) *These ought they to have done, and not to have left the Other undone.* A due Reflection therefore upon this Truth, that the Understanding the Obscure Places of Scripture, is not a thing strictly required of us, or needful for us, will be of use to moderate our too great Eagerness in the Pursuit of such kind of knowledge; to render us less impatient and uneasy under what we *do not* understand of it, and less positive and dogmatical in what we *do.* And thus the Two greatest Temptations towards perverting Scripture will be removed, an Excessive *Curiosity* in Searches of this Kind, and an Over-weening *Fondness* for our own private Interpretations and Opinions.

4<sup>thly</sup>, If we would not wrest the *hard* S E R M.  
*Places in Scripture*, we must be sure to XI  
make that an inviolable Rule and Law   
to ourselves, never to expound them so  
as to *oppose Perspicuous and Clear ones*;  
but so to order our Interpretation of  
Doubtful Points, as to make them fall  
in with the clear and intelligible Parts of  
the same Revelation; so as together with  
them to make up one Complete Body  
of Truths, perfectly agreeing with each  
other.

The best Way of knowing whether  
a Line be Crooked or not, is to apply  
it to One that is confessedly streight;  
and the surest Way of not Erring in  
Obscure Passages, is to make Plain  
Texts the Measure and Judge of them.  
The greatest Part of the Abuses and  
Misinterpretations of Scripture have a-  
risen from a contrary Management;  
from Mens giving obscure Texts a new  
and particular Sense of their own *first*,  
and then growing fond of that Inven-  
tion *afterwards*, and resolving to bring  
all the plainest Passages in Scripture,  
whether



SERM. whether they will or no, to Countenance  
 XI. and Comply with it.



That we may carry ourselves after a quite different manner in our Searches, it is fit for us to observe,

5<sup>thly</sup>, and *Lastly*, That the safest and securest Way of looking into these *δυσνόητα* of St. Paul, and the other Holy Writers, is, to postpone the Consideration of them, till we have mastered what is sure and easy in Scripture, till we have rooted and grounded ourselves in those Points of Doctrine that lie obvious and open; and when we have done that, there will be no Danger of looking into any thing else, let it be never so hard, and never so obscure. For either we shall hit upon the right Interpretation of it; or if we do not, the Wrong one shall not hurt us. A Man that holds all that is plainly contained in Scripture, and all that is necessary to be held by him, may in that which is not plain, and not necessary, innocently abound in his own Sense.

For

For though he should in these Matters S E R M.  
mistake in his Opinions, and mistake the XI.  
Sense of Scripture, upon which he  
grounds those Opinions; yet those Mi-  
stakes cannot be fatal, because not fun-  
damental. He can never maintain any  
thing *Directly repugnant* to the *Catholic*  
Faith, and *Evidently destructive* of it;  
and while he *does not*, he may maintain  
what else he pleases; and so he does it  
with Sobriety and Modesty, and a due  
Deference to the Opinion of those, who  
have a Right to be listened to in these  
things, his Error (if it be one) shall ne-  
ver prove dangerous, or be imputed to  
him. And this Remark is what is plain-  
ly suggested to us by the Words of the  
Text, where St. Peter tells us, that those  
which wrested the hard Places in St. Paul's  
Writings, and the other Scriptures,  
were *the Unlearned and Unstable*, that is  
(as I told you) those who being not well  
grounded in the Faith, were Easy to be  
drawn aside into pernicious Opinions  
and destructive Errors. From whence  
it follows, that the best Way to secure  
our-

S E R M. ourselves from thus perverting what is

XI. obscure in Scripture is, *first*, to render  
 ~~~~~ ourselves *Learned and Stable* in what is  
 plain; and fixing that as our Centre,
 from whence we are not to be removed,
 we may extend our Thoughts and Opinions to what Circumference we please.
 That faith which we keep *pure and undefiled* in Fundamentals, shall either enable us to find out those Truths of lesser Moment, that perfectly agree with it, or shall excuse us before God, if we should miss of them. There will be a Probability from hence of our Understanding Obscure Texts rightly; or if we do not, yet there will be a Certainty of our not incurring the Guilt of *Wresting Scripture to Our own Destruction*.

Thus have I dispatched the Second general Observation, which I raised from the Text, (*viz.*) to consider from thence, What Temper and Qualifications of Mind, what Precaution and Degrees of Knowledge are requisite, in order to make our Enquiries into the
 Obscure

Obscure Parts of Holy Writ Innocent SERM.
and Useful to us. XI.

I might observe also from hence, in the
3^d Place, That if Perverting *Obscure*
Passages of Scripture be a thing in itself
damnable, as *St. Peter* assures us, it is;
how much more certainly damnable is
it to pervert *plain* ones? And then infer,
4^{thly}, and *Lastly* also, That if such a
Sentence be pronounced upon those,
who *Wrest* Scripture; then surely a much
higher Degree of Punishment is reserved
for those, who *Affront* and *Ridicule* it.
But because the *First* of these Points has
been already in some measure intimated
in the preceding Discourse, and there
occasionally explained; and because the
Second is of too extensive and concerning
a Nature to be now considered; I shall
therefore at present insist upon Neither
of them. They may perhaps employ
our Reflections on some other Opportu-
nity,

A
DISCOURSE

ON

Religious Sincerity,

Wherein the true Marks and Tests
of it are fully set forth.

A
DISCOURSE

ON

Religious Sincerity,

Wherein the true Marks and Tests
of it are fully set forth.

X 2

*A Discourse on Religious Sincerity,
wherein the true Marks and Tests of
it are fully set forth:*

IN A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

Hampton Court

October 15. 1710.

2 COR. xiii. 5.

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the
Faith; prove your own selves.*

THERE are three several Ranks and Orders of Men, into which those that Name the Name of Christ, and profess his Religion, may be divided.

S E R M.

XII.

2 Tim. ii.
15.

X 3

Some

SERM. Some have nothing more than the mere

XII. Name and Profession of Christianity,
 Ephes. iv. 18. for in their Works they deny it; *being alienated from the Life of Christ*, and

paying no manner of Obedience to his Laws; but living in the Open and Avowed Practice of all Kind of Pollutions. Others there are, who as manifestly adorn the Doctrine they embrace, and live up to the Rule which they profess, so far as Human Infirmary will suffer them. They have, by the Grace of God concurring with their Sincere Endeavours, subdued the Power of their Corrupt Lusts and Affections, so that little or no Disturbance doth from thence arise to them; but they go on in the Paths of Virtue, and the Duties of Piety, evenly and Regularly; Glorifying God, and Benefiting Men, and *shining more and more unto a perfect Day*. And to each of these the State and Condition of their Own Souls is known certainly and clearly. A strong Conviction of Guilt terrifies the one, without any Offer of Excuse, or Hope of Pardon; and the Conscience

Prov. iv. 18.

Conscience of the Other bears Witness S E R M.
to their Uprightness, without Doubts, XII.
or Misgivings. Between these there is 
a Middle State of Men, who are neither
notoriously Evil, nor yet remarkably
Virtuous; neither entirely given over to
work Wickedness, nor yet thoroughly
confirmed in Goodness; but in a doubt-
ful, Uncertain Way of Living, and
Thinking; sometimes standing firm in
Virtue, and sometimes failing; some-
times sinning, and sometimes repenting;
sometimes hoping, and sometimes de-
sponding.

To such as these the Exhortation of
the Apostle in my Text is directed:
*Examine yourselves, whether you be in the
Faith; prove your own selves:* That is, Con-
sider your Condition impartially and
thoroughly, try it by the Rules of the
Gospel; satisfy yourselves once for all,
whether you be true sincere Believers,
such as God will accept. If you find
that you *are*, resolve by his Grace to
continue such to your Lives End; if you
find, you *are not*, resolve to make your-

s E R M. selves such, as soon as is possible. For
 XII. nothing can be of more Moment to
 You, than this Knowledge, and these
 Resolutions. *Examine yourselves whe-*
ther ye be in the Faith; prove your own
selves.

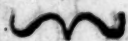
In order to assist you in this Enquiry,
 it shall be the Business of my present
 Discourse to propose some few plain
Marks, or Tests, by which every Man,
 who entertains any Doubts of this
 kind (as very Good Men sometimes
 do) may, if he pleases, Try his own
 Sincerity, and fully satisfy himself, whe-
 ther he be an hearty Believer, and a
 sound Member of that Body, of which
Christ Jesus is the Head: Whether, and
 how far he hath obtained the great
 Christian Perfection, which is to re-
 commend all the rest, I mean, that of
Sincerity.

- I. And, *First*, The most obvious, and
 therefore the most satisfying Mark of
Religious Sincerity is, if a Man, upon a
 Review of his own Thoughts, finds, that
 his

his Resolutions of Obedience are *Universal* and *Unlimited*; without a Reserve for any Favourite Sin, without excepting any particular Instance of Duty, wherein he desires to be excused. *Then* (says the good Psalmist) *shall I not be ashamed*, i.e. *Then* may I safely confide in my Own Innocence and Uprightness, *when I have Respect unto all thy Commandments*; when I find myself equally determined to Obey every Divine Precept, and resolved to allow myself in no Practice whatsoever, which the Law of God doth not allow of. And where this is not the Case, there can be no true Christian Sincerity; which consists in a true Bent and Inclination of the Will towards God; and the *Will* is never *Truly*, but when it is *Totally* inclined towards him; when it is lost, and swallowed up in the *Divine Will*; implicitly likes or dislikes, chooses or refuses, what God hath before-hand approved, or disapproved by his Holy Precepts, or Prohibitions. Is a Man said to be sincere to his Friend, who be-
trays

SERM.

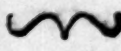
XII.



SERMON. trays him in any One Important Secret,
 XII. committed to his Trust, though he
 ~~~~~ should be faithful in many others? Is a  
 Servant said to be sincere to his Master,  
 who hath any Reserved Cases, wherein  
 he resolves not to consult his Honour,  
 or Interest? No more can a Man be  
 reckoned sincere towards God, who sets  
 up any single Lust, Inclination, or  
 Thought, against what he knows to be  
 the Divine Will and Pleasure. And this  
 is evidently the Reason of that Determination in St. James; *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in One Point, he is Guilty of All.* For (as it there follows) *he that said, Do not Commit Adultery, said also, Do not Kill.* Now, if thou Commit no Adultery, yet if thou Kill, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law; i. e. If thou neglectest to observe any One Divine Command, knowing it to be One, Thou art in that Instance as open, and declared a Rebel to the Authority Enacting it, as if thou shookest off thy Obedience to All.

James ii.  
 10, 11.

If

If then, upon a Careful Survey of SERM.  
ourselves, we find, that we are, from XII.  
the Bottom of our Souls, disposed, and   
resolved to Comply with *All* the Terms  
of Duty (whether Grateful, or Un-  
grateful to Flesh and Blood) which the  
Gospel proposeth to us; that it is our  
fixt Intent not to do, in any Case,  
what God hath forbidden, nor to neg-  
lect what he hath enjoined; and that  
there is no Appetite, Desire, or De-  
sign so dear to us, but we are ready to  
part with it, as soon as its Opposition  
to a Divine Command shall be made  
out; if this, upon Examination, prove  
to be our Case, we have great Reason  
to think well of ourselves, and to Con-  
clude, that we are in such a State of  
Mind, as God will Accept, and Re-  
ward. A

*Second, and sure Proof of Religious* II.  
*Sincerity* may be drawn from a *General*  
*View* of the *Common* Course of our  
Lives, and Actions. If there be an *Even*  
*Tenor* of Goodness visible in our Con-  
duct,

SERM. duct, a *Regular and Steddy* Pursuit of

XII. Virtue, without any Gross and Notorious Failures in Scandalous Instances, and Flagrant Acts of Wickedness; if, whenever we happen to fall by some great Temptation, we continue not long and quietly under the Guilt of it, but recover our Ground forthwith, and return to our Duty; proceeding on in the Paths of Obedience and an Holy Life habitually, and discharging our Obligations to God and Man pretty Evenly and Uniformly; then may we from hence also make a Comfortable Guess at the Goodness of our Condition in this World, and nourish very Promising Hopes to ourselves of being happy in Another. 'Tis not to be expected, that while we are in the Body, we should live altogether free from the Stains and Infirmities of it. In the very Best of Men, their Passions will sometimes prevail over their Reason, and the strongest Sense of their Duty will give way to a Present Temptation. A Pious Man may, now and then, be  
very

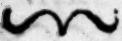
very Cold and Languid in the Performance of his Devotions, and very full of Distractions and Wanderings. A

S E R M.  
XII.

A Meek and Good Man, by some unforeseen Accident, and by several Conspiring Circumstances, may be raised up into an Unbecoming Pitch of Anger and Resentment. A Temperate Man may through Importunity, or for want of a due Guard over himself, be gradually and insensibly betrayed into some Degree of Excess. But then, in all these Cases, the Person falling, quickly comes to himself again; the Fit is short, and soon over, and is succeeded immediately by Shame, and Remorse, by New Resolutions, and more Vigorous Endeavours. Consider the Man altogether, and you will find, that the General Current of his Behaviour bears witness to his Integrity, though he fail now and then in particular Instances. And God, who sees all our Actions at once, will Judge us upon the whole View, and not single out our Worst Qualities, without any Regard to our Best, in order



SERM. der to exercise his Severity upon us.

XII.  Let no Man therefore too hastily, and too severely condemn himself for frequent Infirmities, Slips, and Neglects; let no Man, who would judge aright of his Spiritual Estate, fix his Eye too intently on some particular Blemishes and Failings, of which perhaps he is conscious; but let him look rather to the main Scope and Drift of his Thoughts, Words, and Actions; and by that let him try himself, as by the Justest Measure and Standard of Sincere Goodness. How contrary to this is the Conduct of some Good and Pious Souls! How usual is it for Persons, well-advanced in Piety, when they are making such Enquiries as these, to dwell altogether on their Defects and Miscarriages, without regarding the Regular Course of a Virtuous and Well-ordered Life; and to condemn themselves, as False and Insincere, because they are not perfect and Sinless? God forbid, that These should be the Terms, upon which we are to be dealt with! For where then would be the

the Man upon Earth, who could under- SERM.  
go the Scrutiny? *If thou, Lord, shouldst* XII.  
*be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O* PF. CXXX.  
*Lord, who may abide it? A* 3.

*Third Sign and Test of Sincerity is, if* III.  
a Man be not content with any determin-  
ed Proportion of Goodness, nor willing  
to sit down at such a Point of Virtue,  
as he hath already attained, without  
aiming at a further Degree of Increase  
and Proficiency. *For the Path of the* Prov. iv.  
*Just is as the shining Light, says the Wise* 18.  
*Man, shining more and more unto a per-*  
*fect Day:* That is, the truly Good are  
always aiming to be better, and how  
far soever they have run in the Race of  
Virtue, still urge on-ward incessantly,  
and eagerly; *forgetting those things which* Phil. iii.  
*are behind, and reaching forth unto those* 12.  
*things which are before, they press towards*  
*the Mark for the Prize of the High-call-*  
*ing of God in Christ Jesus.* A Soul tru-  
ly touched with the Sense of its own  
Sins and Unworthiness, and of the In-  
finite Mercies and Condescensions of  
God

SERM. God towards us, will never Stint and

XII. Bound itself in its Returns; but will  
 endeavour to Love as much, and to O-

bey as far as is possible. Let its Attain-

ment be what they will, yet it knows,

that they are short, extremely short of

its Obligations; that the Measures of

Grace, which we arrive at here, are on-

ly Earnests, and Spurs, and Helps to-

wards larger Communications, and

higher Improvements; and therefore

that a Man is never so good as he *ought*

to be, who doth not heartily desire, and

design to be as good as he *can* be; and

breathe and pant after Perfection itself,

even in *this* Life, though he be satisfied,

that it is not fully attainable, but in *ano-*

*ther*; since withal he is satisfied, that the

more uniformly and vigorously he presses

toward the Mark of Perfection in this

Life, the nearer still shall he approach

to it, though he shall never Reach it;

and the nearer he is towards reaching

it here, the more glorious shall be his

Crown, and the more exalted his State

of Perfection hereafter. And therefore,

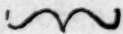
if



if any one find himself inclined to circumscribe his Practice within such or such Limits of Duty, beyond which he never intends, nor expects to go; to hold fast the Pleasures of Life, and to enjoy as much of them as ever he can, consistently with the Principles of Religion; arguing always for the Utmost Extent of his Christian Liberty, and desiring to make his Obligations as Narrow as may be; such an one hath Reason to conclude, that he is as yet short of those Qualifications, which are necessary to recommend him to the Judge of all Hearts, and Discerner of Spirits.

S E R M.

XII.



A *Fourth* Mark or Test by which a Man may discover, whether he be *sincerely Religious*, or not, is, to Examine himself, whether he be as inclinable to exercise the Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life in Private, as in Publick; without doing any thing merely for the Applause, or Fear of Men; but under a Conscientious Regard to Him,

IV.

V O L. III.

Y

that



S E R M. that *seeth in secret*, and under an Expe-

XII. *etation that He, who seeth in Secret, will,*  
 at the great Day of Account, *reward*  
 him *Openly*. For Example, let a Man  
 consider, whether he be as punctual  
 and exact in performing his *Closet*-devo-  
 tions, as in repairing to the *Publick* Of-  
 fices of the Church, and as Uneasy un-  
 der the Omission of the *One*, as the *O-*  
*ther*; and when he prays in private,  
 whether he be as Composed, and Reve-  
 rent, and Devout in his Behaviour, as  
 he is, when the Eyes of a great Assem-  
 bly are upon him. Again, as to Points  
 of Mercy, Generosity, and Justice, let  
 him reflect, whether he be as ready to give  
 Alms in *Private*, as in the *Streets*; to  
 defend the Cause of the Injured and  
 Oppressed, and to support a good Man's  
 Reputation, in such Circumstances, when  
 he is sure never to hear of it again, as  
 he would be, if all the World heard,  
 and observed him. Finally, whether he  
 be as loth to defraud his Neighbour in a  
 great Matter, or a small, when he might  
 do it securely, without Fear of a Disco-  
 very;

Mat. vi.  
18.

very; as he should be, if he were sure SERM.  
to be arraigned in a Court of Judicature XII.  
for it. He that can truly answer these  
Questions to his Own Satisfaction, hath  
no great Reason to distrust his Sincerity;  
and He who cannot, hath as little Reason  
to depend upon it.

Hypocrisy, when in Perfection, will  
act real Goodness so well, and put on  
the Shape and Disguise of it so exactly,  
as to deceive even Him who plays the  
Part, as well as those who look on, and  
create a Belief in him that he is what he  
seems to be; till he compares himself  
with himself, his Private with his Publick  
Conduct: And that Touchstone never  
fails to distinguish True from Counter-  
feit Piety; for the surest Indications of  
Mens Characters are those Actions and  
Discourses which flow from them, when  
they are off of their Guard, and under  
no Awe, or Restraint from the Eyes and  
Observations of others.

A *Fifth* Thing, by which *Sincerity* in V.  
Religion manifests itself, is, when a Man  
appears to act, not out of Bye-aims,  
Y 2 and

S E R M. and a Private Interest, but out of a true

XII. Zeal for the Honour of God, the Interest  
of Virtue, and the Good of Mankind,  
Would you satisfy yourself, whether  
you sincerely love such a Relation,  
such an Acquaintance, such a Friend?  
Consider, do you on all Occasions de-  
sign to promote what is for their Service  
and Reputation? do you heartily desire  
and endeavour Their good, without  
having an Immediate Eye on your own  
Advantage in it? If you do, 'tis certain  
that your Friendship and Affection are  
Sincere; for no Man can give better  
Proofs and Assurances of it. And the  
Case is the same with respect to God and  
Religion. If a Man feels himself in-  
wardly warmed and acted by a true  
Concern for the Glory of God, for the  
Honour of his Name, and of his Wor-  
ship; if he be apt to undervalue World-  
ly Regards, and petty private Views,  
in comparison of this great End; if in  
Evil Days, when the Manners of Men  
are extremely corrupted, he is not ashamed  
to act up to strict Principles of Virtue,  
which

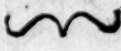


which are not in Fashion, nor is remiss S E R M.  
XII.  
in the Practice of those Duties, which he foresees, will scarcely turn to account;   
espousing firmly and unalterably the Cause of God, and Goodness, even when Hundreds on his Right Hand have gone off, and Thousands have revolted on his Left: In a word, when a Man can be Loose and Sceptical, with the General Applause of the World, and cannot be otherwise, without being despised, and pity'd; and yet is so far from being tempted to a Compliance, that he doth what he can to stem the Torrent of Impiety, and to make his Virtue as Conspicuous, as other Mens Vices: When a Man, I say, doth, upon Reflection, find himself thus resolved and qualified, he hath great Reason to be pleased with his Condition, and to conclude, that it is well pleasing to God also: For there is no surer Mark of Integrity, than a Courageous Adherence to Virtue, in the midst of a General and scandalous Apostasy. Which is the Reason that *Noah* and *Abraham*,



SERM. *Lot* and *Daniel* have so high an Encosium bestowed on them in Scripture, and are recommended as Patterns of a strict, uncomplying Uprightness, to all succeeding Ages. Further,

VI. *Sixthly*, It is no slight Token of our *Sincerity* in Religion, if we are apt to suspect it, on the Account of *little* things; which is often the Case of very Devout *Christians*, and who have really the least Occasion to mistrust themselves, of any Men. Persons of a Nice and Tender Conscience, very careful to please God, and very fearful of offending him, are for that very Reason, prone to imagine that they fall infinitely short of their Duty, if they do not, in every respect, exactly discharge it; and to disquiet themselves on this Account, with many Groundless Scruples and Terrors. Sometimes, the Principle, from whence their Repentance sprang, gives them great Uneasiness; for they remember, that the Reformation of Heart and Life, in which they are now well

well advanced, began at first, not from S E R M.  
a true and ardent Love of God, but XII.  
from the mere Dread of Punishment. 

Sometimes their Unequal Performance of Religious Duties dejects, and dispirits them; they find themselves cold, and unmoved, when they are upon their Knees; in the most Solemn and Raising Parts of the Service, and even at the Reception of the Blessed Sacrament itself, they do not feel an holy Warmth kindling in their Hearts, nor their Mind melting under the Impressions that are then made upon it: And they conclude therefore, that there is a Vein of Hypocrisy running through all these Performances, which makes them Worthless, and Unacceptable. Now these, and such as these, I say, are, for the most part, the Doubts and Misgivings of the sincerely Good and Pious; for they are such as seldom trouble the Consciences of Men of a different Character: And therefore those very Scruples, which disturb good *Christians* so much, would, if rightly understood, give them Mat-

SERM. ter of sound Comfort and Encourage-

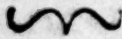
XII. ment; their very *Doubts* concerning the

~~~~~ Goodness of their State, are, if they had but the Heart to think so, a sure Reason why they should not doubt of it. Let not then the true Saints and Servants of God perplex and afflict themselves with such Difficulties; let them not give up Religion, by their Means, to the Laughter and Scorn of Profane Men, who, from a few such Instances as these, take Pleasure to represent it, as residing only in weak Brains, as the Employment of Melancholy, and Diseased Minds; and who stick not, in the Gayety of their Hearts, to say, that a strict Piety is good for nothing, but to make the Owners of it troublesome to themselves, and Useless to the rest of the World. O, let not any one, who wishes well to Goodness, disserve the Interest of it more, by his unreasonable Scruples, than he promotes it, by his Exemplary Practice! But let him resolve to summon up all his Reasoning Powers, and to set them in Array against these insignificant

significant Phantasms and Illusions, which S E R M.
would certainly retire before this single XII.
Reflection (had a Man but the Courage 
to make and to believe it) that such Niceties dwell usually there, where there is least Need of them, and are a real Sign of that *Sincere Piety*, the Want of which those, who thus unhappily suffer under them, deplore.

Seventbly, Another sure Token of our VII.
Sincerity in Religion, is, when we delight to read the Holy Scriptures, and have a savory Taste and Relish of them; when we find somewhat more in them than in mere Human Writings, and are apt to settle into a pious Composure of Mind while we are perusing them. When we come to them with Satisfaction and Eagerness, and are uneasy under any long Discontinuance of our Conversation with them. This is the Token and Character, by which the experienced Psalmist teaches us to know a good Man. *His Delight* (saith he) *is in the* Psal. i. 2.
Law of the Lord, and in that Law doth
he

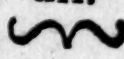
SERM. *be meditate Day and Night.* 'Tis true;

XII.  it may sometimes happen, that a Person of a sound and sincere Piety shall read the Holy Scriptures, without being much warmed, or affected with them. He may be under an Indisposition and Languor of Mind; the Business, or Pleasures of Life, and Worldly Objects may now and then take Possession of his Heart, and shut the Door against Spiritual Impressions; but then this is not a Common and every Day's Case; he is for the most part well disposed and affected towards this Divine Employment; his Appetite is generally awakened, and his Taste very good; *and he rejoiceth in*

Pf. cxix. *God's Word, as one that findeth great*
162. *Spoils. Did not our Heart burn within*
us (said the good Disciples) while he

Luk. xxiv. *talked with us by the Way, and while he*
32. *opened to us the Scriptures?* But if a Man can frequently peruse those sacred Pages, without any Degree of sensible Emotion and Concern, without being touched any ways by the Matter of them, or awed by the Majestick Man-

ner

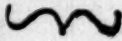
ner of Expression, which distinguishes SERM.
 them from all other Writings; this is XII.
 as sure an Indication of a Sick Soul, as 
 a Palate, which does not relish the
 most Savory Meats, is of a Diseased
 Body. *The Fining Pot is for Silver, and* Prov. xvii.
the Furnace for Gold; but the Word of ^{3.}
God trieth the Hearts: And it is Quick
and Powerful (saith the Author to the
Hebrews) *and sharper than any two-edged* Heb. iv.
Sword; piercing even to the Dividing ^{12.}
asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the
Joints and Marrow, and is a Discerner
of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.
 And needs must that Heart be very hard
 and Callous, and almost past Feeling,
 upon which so pungent and searching a
 Medicine doth not Operate.

These are the several Marks or Tests,
 by which we may Examine ourselves,
 whether we are in the Faith, whether we
 are possessed of that truly *Christian Sin-*
cerity which God above all things re-
 quires. Let us do it honestly and im-
 partially; let us apply the Rules which
 have been given, and take an Estimate
 of

SERM. of the True State and Condition of our

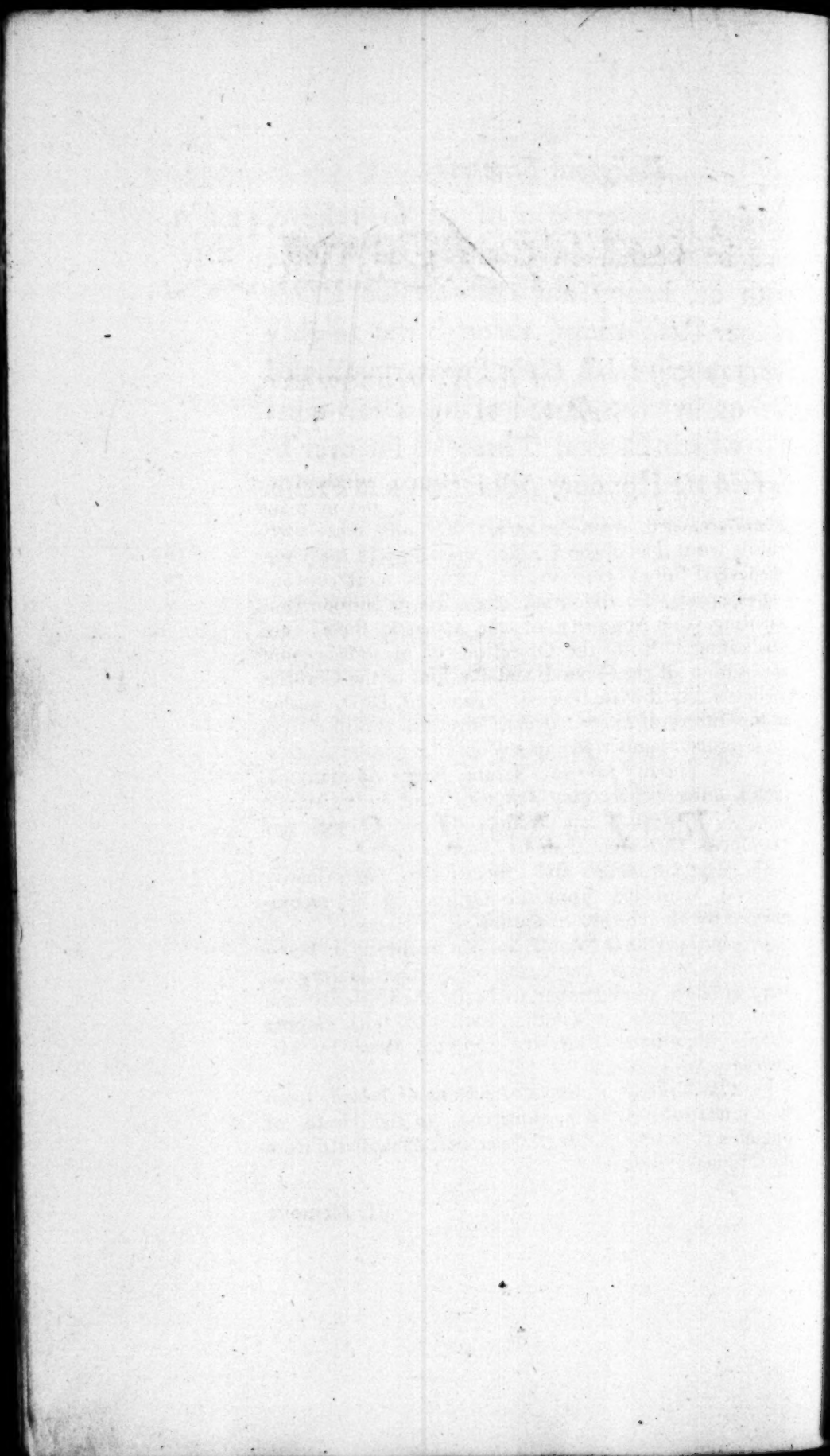
XII. Souls, by the means of them. If, upon
 a strict Enquiry, we find, that our Hearts
 are Right with God; let us give him the
 Praise, and resolve by his Grace and
 Blessing, to keep them so, *all the while*
 Job xxvii. *our Breath is in us, and the Spirit of God*
 3. *is in our Nostrils;* and endeavour to
 grow in this Faith, and to increase in
 this Grace, more and more, *till we come*
 Ephes. iv. *in the Unity of the Faith, and of the*
 13. *Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a*
perfect Man, unto the Measure of the
Stature of the Fulness of Christ. But if,
 after a Serious Review of our Lives and
 Consciences, it appears, that they are
 not such as will strictly bear the Test;
 let us form immediate Resolutions of
 working ourselves up into those De-
 grees of Sincerity which we want, and
 1 Pet. i. 5. of being as *Holy and Blameless,* as we
 ought to be, *in all manner of Conversa-*
tion.

May

May we every one of us so resolve, **SERM.**
 and be blessed in God's good Time, **XII.**
 with an happy and comfortable Effect 
 of our Resolutions, through the mighty
 Assistances of his Holy Spirit, purchased
 for us by the Blood of his Dear Son!
 To which Eternal Three be for ever a-
 scribed all Honour, Adoration and Praise.
Amen.

F I N I S.

7 NO 68





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